

SPECIAL

TIME

EDITION

100 MUST-READ FANTASY BOOKS





TIME

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HOW WE CHOSE OUR LIST



We look to artists to help us understand—and escape. TIME celebrates the best, most captivating and essential fantasy books of all time, dating back to the 9th century.

To develop our list, we began by recruiting a panel of leading fantasy authors—Tomi Adeyemi, Cassandra Clare, Diana Gabaldon, Neil Gaiman, Marlon James, N.K. Jemisin, George R.R. Martin and Sabaa Tahir—to join TIME staff in nominating the top books of the genre (panelists did not nominate their own works). The group then rated 250 nominees on a scale, and using their responses, TIME created a ranking.

Finally, TIME editors considered each finalist based on key factors, including originality, ambition, artistry, critical and popular reception, and influence on the fantasy genre and literature more broadly.

The result is a list that underscores the imaginative breadth of fantasy fiction—from early roots in the oral storytelling tradition that brought about works like *The Arabian Nights*, to modern classics like *A Wrinkle in Time* and groundbreaking more recent novels like *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*, *The Poppy War* and *Elatsoe*. Together, these titles help us trace our history and understand our reality.

FOLKTALE

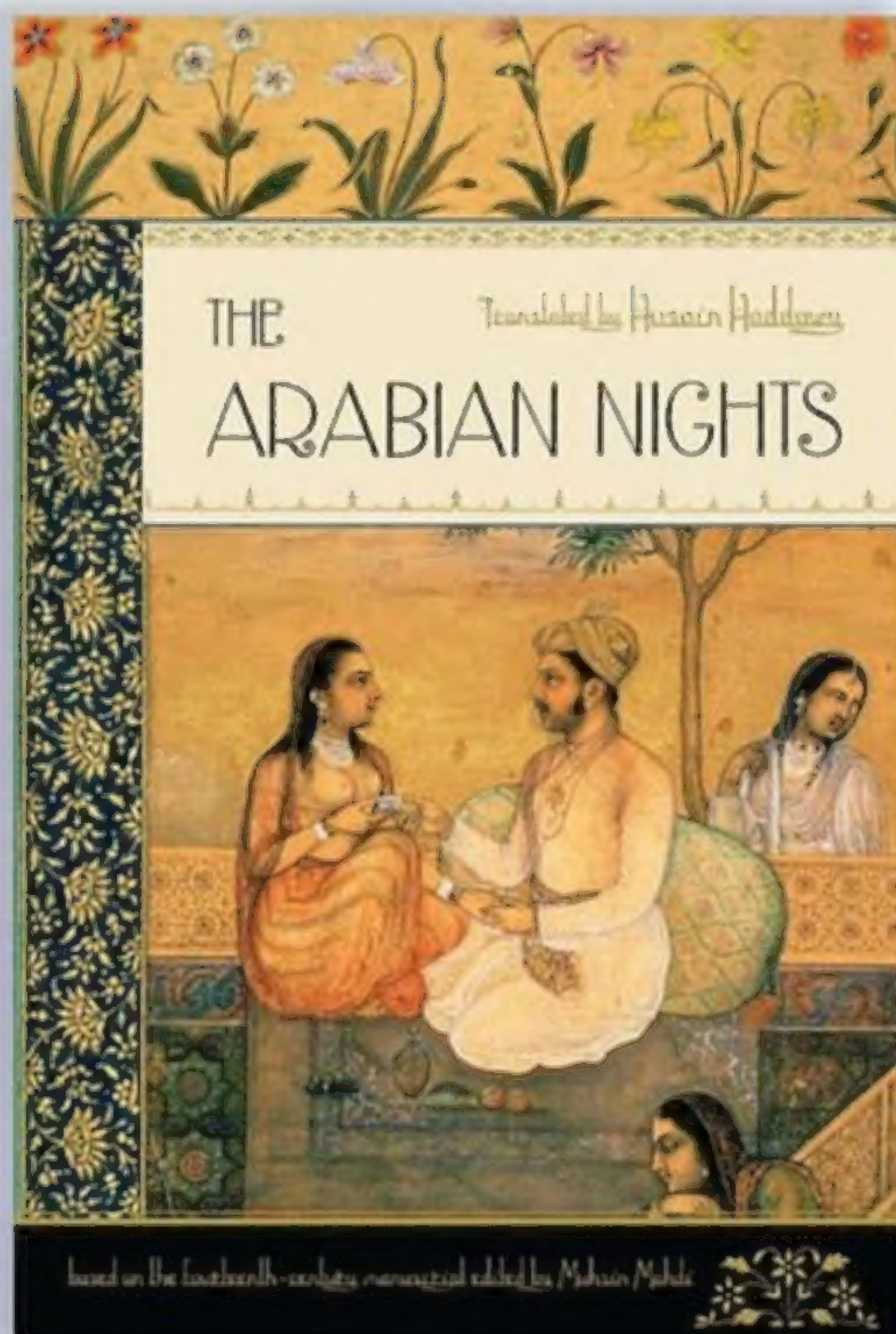
THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

written by **ANONYMOUS**

Nearly everyone is familiar with this collection of folktales, also known as *One Thousand and One Nights*, and its infamous framing device: Scheherazade, the vizier's daughter, is set to be married and then killed by the king; she forestalls this destiny by convincing the king to hear a story, which she then draws out for 1,001 nights by ending

each evening on a cliffhanger. (In other words, Scheherazade invented narrative television.) It's hard to ignore that, from the start, this book of short stories is deeply misogynistic; the problematic gender dynamics of its time are pervasive and often stomach churning. And it's rife with racism toward dark-skinned Africans and casual discrimination of Jews. It's also impossible to ignore the tremendous influence on storytelling these tales have had, far beyond the Islamic Golden Age in which they were initially compiled—the earliest known printed page dates back to the 9th century. There are stories within stories (within stories, sometimes); there are unreliable narrators; there is foreshadowing; there are plot twists. There are tales of horror, crime, sci-fi and, of course, fantasy. (There is not, as pop culture has led us to believe, a tale of Aladdin, nor of Ali Baba and the thieves.) Without *The Arabian Nights*—and its genies, sea monsters, automata with life breathed into them, demons commingling with humans and more—it's hard to imagine certain elements of works by H.P. Lovecraft, H.G. Wells, Jorge Louis Borges, A.S. Byatt, Edgar Allan Poe and the entire comic book industry, just to name a few. While there have been many editions and translations of *The Arabian Nights*, Mushin Mahdi's 1984 Arabic-language edition and Husain Haddawy's corresponding 1990 English translation are among the most celebrated.

—*Elijah Wolfson*



HISTORICAL FANTASY

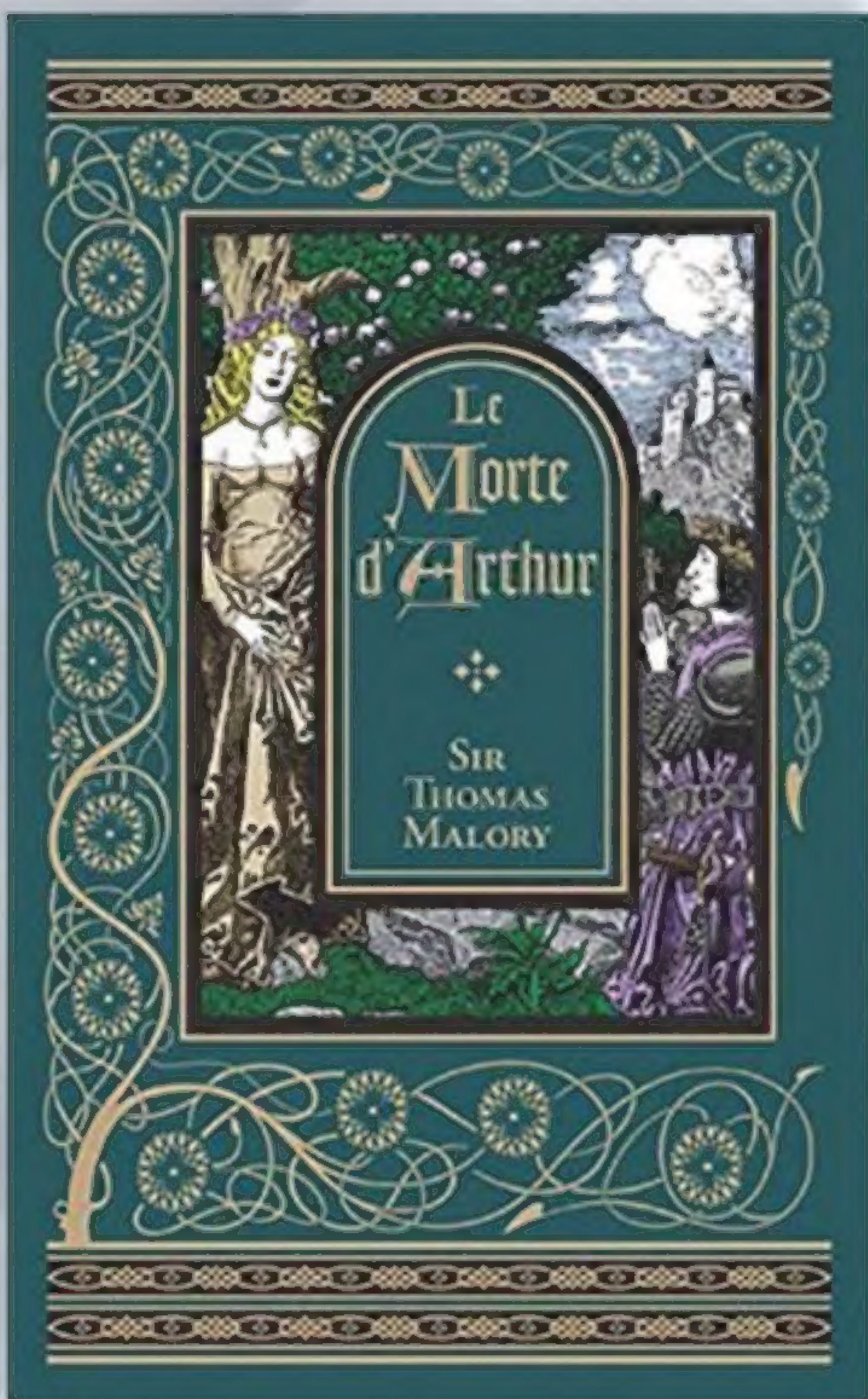
LE MORTE D'ARTHUR

written by **THOMAS MALORY**

One of the earliest printed works of the fantasy genre can be found in the 15th century's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, French for "the death of Arthur." The book, published in 1485 by Sir Thomas Malory (whose authorship remains disputed), is a collection of stories, myths

and folklore surrounding the exploits of King Arthur, who supposedly defended Britain from Saxon invaders in the 5th or 6th century C.E. These stories, which are retellings, reimaginings or consolidations of oral tradition and disparate epic poems, contain classic tales including Arthur receiving Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake and the Knights of the Round Table's search for the Holy Grail. Through it all, the supernatural that lies hidden in the known world, the magic of Merlin and the threat of French giants ground the work in fantasy. Unfortunately, the misogyny and bigotry of the era is on display throughout; it dehumanizes Muslim characters, and when women aren't marginalized, they're often presented as antagonists. *Le Morte d'Arthur* is important to the genre for its longevity, and has gone on to inspire all manner of artists, from Monty Python to Stephen King. This book, with its disputed authorship and patchwork of long-told stories, also stands as a testament to how the fantasy genre has always evolved. This 500-year-old text mixed and matched its parts from the work of many, all while creating new perspectives and using fantastical themes to explain human existence, in the same way that the genre continues today.

—*Peter Allen Clark*



CHILDREN'S FANTASY

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

written by **LEWIS CARROLL**

More than 150 years after its publication, Lewis Carroll's masterpiece stands as one of the most celebrated—and fraught—works in the history of literature. The epic tale of a curious girl who falls down a rabbit hole into a magical, tantalizing and terrifying world populated by anthropomorphic animals never ceases to ignite children's imaginations. Despite the fact that Carroll hadn't even intended to publish Alice's adventures, which began as a series of stories he told to a colleague's three young daughters, the book changed young people's literature. It helped to replace stiff Victorian didacticism with a looser, sillier, nonsense style that reverberated through the works of language-loving 20th-century authors as different as James Joyce, Douglas Adams and Dr. Seuss. Amid hundreds of derivative works (and that's a conservative estimate) in mediums ranging from opera to amusement-park rides to video games, Disney's 1951 animated feature has become a classic unto itself. In the '60s, the generation that grew up with that film transformed Alice into a countercultural icon, reframing her journey as an allegory for psychedelic exploration. But even sober adults with scant interest in children's literature can appreciate the book's wild linguistic experiments. And though the nature of Carroll's affection for the real Alice has come into question over the years, the story itself remains as clever, precocious and pure of heart as its heroine.

—*Judy Berman*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Lewis Carroll was the pen name for Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, who was born in Daresbury, Cheshire, England, in 1832. He was educated at Oxford's Christ Church, where he lived most of his life as a scholar, teacher and

Anglican deacon. In addition to his fiction works, Dodgson also published number of books on mathematics and invented the "word ladder" puzzle, the first of which was published in *Vanity Fair* in 1879. He never married or had children. Dodgson died in Surrey in 1898.





CHILDREN'S FANTASY

THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

written by **LEWIS CARROLL**

Decades of adaptation and consolidation have jumbled Lewis Carroll's two Alice books in our collective memory, with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* largely subsuming its 1871 sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass*. But it was *Looking-Glass* that introduced indelible English nursery-rhyme characters like Humpty-Dumpty and the quarrelsome twins Tweedledee and Tweedledum into Alice's world. You can find "Jabberwocky" and "The Walrus and the Carpenter," two of Carroll's best-loved poems, within its pages. And though it revisits its protagonist just six months after Wonderland, the sequel is substantially more sophisticated than its predecessor, using chess as a central metaphor to trace Alice's ascent from pawn to queen. Readers who missed out on the second half of Alice's adventures as kids might be surprised to discover as adults how much offbeat insight they offer into the chessboard-like machinations of life.

—*Judy Berman*

/ **ADAPTATIONS** *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (1966) was a NBC TV musical special that won an Emmy for costume design. Channel 4 aired a TV film in 1998, a chamber opera commissioned by Australia's Victorian Opera premiered in 2008, and Walt Disney Pictures released a live-action animated version in 2016.

CHILDREN'S FANTASY

FIVE CHILDREN AND IT

written by **E. NESBIT**

After moving into their summer home in the English countryside, five brothers and sisters go digging in the local gravel-pits and make a curious discovery. At the bottom of a hole, the children find a strange furry creature which they learn is a Psammead, or sand-fairy. The Psammead has magical powers—it can grant each child one wish a day. The children take advantage of the Psammead's abilities, but soon their wishes have unforeseen consequences. E. Nesbit describes their adventures in casual and witty prose, and she's never patronizing to her younger audience. Instead, she invites her readers to understand the realities of living in a grown-up world, which has its difficulties, no matter the level of magic involved. The book has remained timeless since its 1902 publication—it has never gone out of print—and has influenced a wide range of adventure narratives, including *The Chronicles of Narnia*. —*Annabel Gutterman*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edith Nesbit was born in the Greater London area in 1858 and traveled through France and

Germany as a child before resettling in England as a late teen. She was one of the founders of the Fabian Society, a socialist organization affiliated with the Labour Party, and wrote and lectured about socialism before her children's books became successful. She wrote poetry and adult novels as well, but her more than 60 children's books are considered her greatest achievement. She died in England in 1924.

CHILDREN'S FANTASY

OZMA OF OZ

written by **L. FRANK BAUM**

After the success of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, published in 1900, L. Frank Baum wrote a whole series of wildly inventive Oz books—14 in all, most of them featuring the young heroine he introduced in the first, *Dorothy Gale of Kansas*. Nearly all are terrific, but the third, from 1907, may be the most memorable: *Ozma of Oz* finds Dorothy en route to Australia by ship, where she is blown into the drink during a massive storm. She floats to shore in a chicken coop, and finds herself not in Oz, but in a nearby kingdom known as the Land of Ev. There she reconnects with her old friends Scarecrow, the Cowardly Lion and the Tin Woodman, and makes new ones including Tiktok, a mechanical copper man. But she also meets several formidable enemies, including the haughty Princess Langwidere, who keeps exactly 30 beautiful heads in a mirror-lined dressing room, changing them according to whim. Baum's description of Langwidere is vivid, alluring and more than a little macabre, and the accompanying pen-and-ink illustration by John R. Neill, showing her as a chic, Gibson Girl-style temptress, only seals the deal. The Oz books are frequently cited by creative, inventive professionals as childhood favorites. Strike up a conversation with any of them and see if Langwidere doesn't come up within the first five minutes. No one ever forgets the princess with interchangeable heads. —*Stephanie Zacharek*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Lyman Frank Baum was born in Chittenango, New York, in 1856, the son of a successful businessman. His father bought him a printing press when he was a boy, and Baum used it to publish amateur journals, including one about stamp collecting. Although he was to become a master storyteller, his first book,

published when Baum was 30, was about breeding Hamburg chickens. Baum's first love was theater, but he only found modest success onstage. He moved to South Dakota with his wife in his early 30s, where he ran a store and edited the local newspaper. His experience in the Mount Rushmore State is said to have influenced his description of Kansas in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. He wrote 14 books based in the Land of Oz. Baum died in Los Angeles in 1919.



CHILDREN'S FANTASY

MARY POPPINS

written by P.L. TRAVERS

Fans of the classic Disney film *Mary Poppins* may be disappointed to learn that its source material contains no dancing penguins. There's little mention of the tap-dancing chimney sweep Bert, and Mr. Banks never flew any kites. But still, P.L. Travers' classic story contains one of the most intriguing protagonists in the history of children's literature: the peculiar and magical nanny Mary Poppins. The book, which is the first in a series of whimsical tales about the beleaguered Banks family, follows Poppins after the east wind blows her and her wondrous carpet bag to the house on Cherry Tree Lane. What ensues is a captivating adventure filled with so much heart that it inspired movies and music for generations. The 1964 film adaptation introduced viewers to a plethora of songs about love, family and laughter, and led to Julie Andrews' Academy Award win for best actress.

—Annabel Gutterman

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

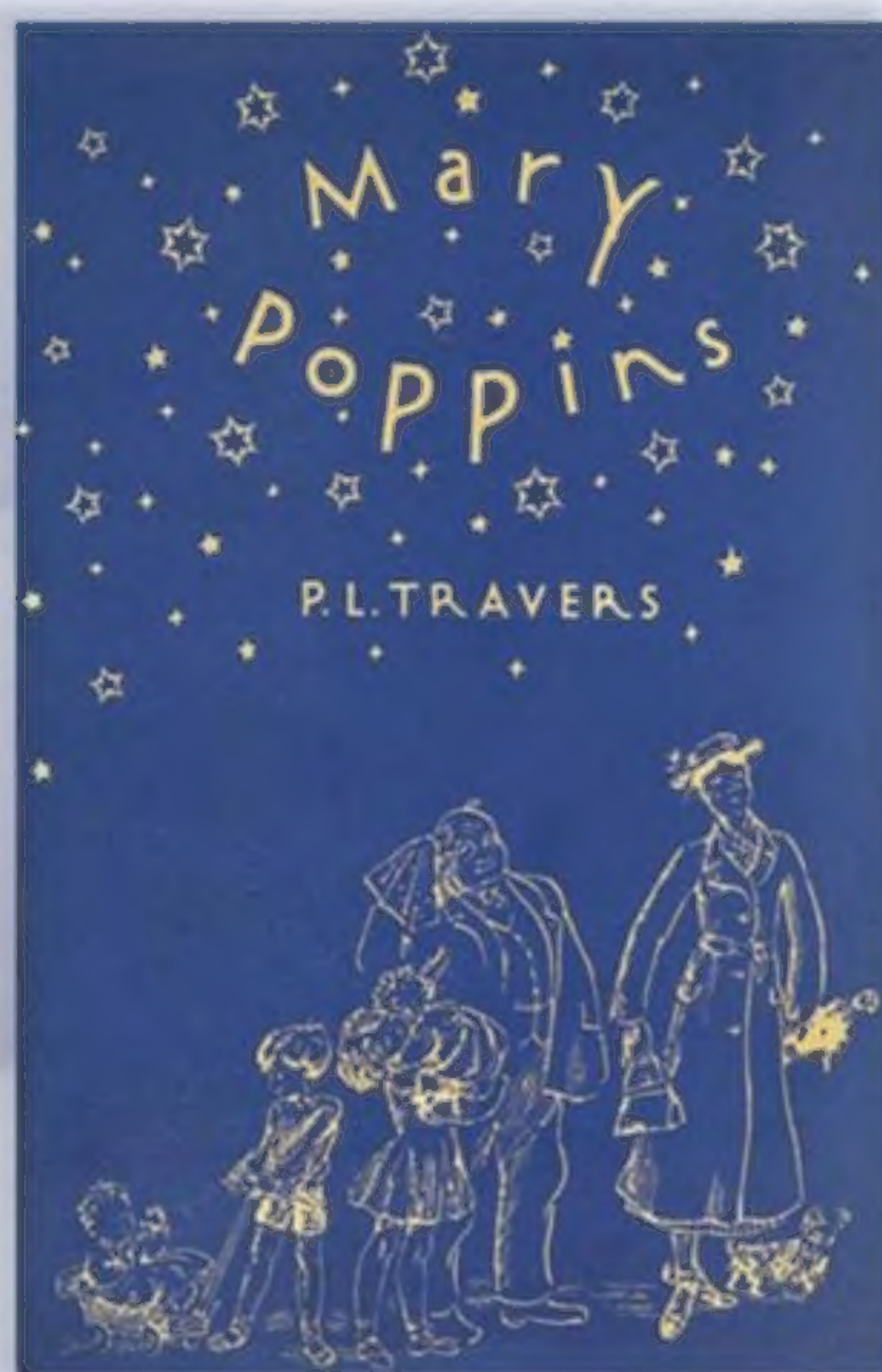
P.L. Travers was born in Queensland, Australia, in 1899. As a teen, she became enamored with theater and took a job touring with a Sydney-based Shakespearean company in 1921. While touring in New Zealand,

she fell in love with a journalist who had one of her poems published. She went on to become a contributor to several different publications. In 1924, she left Sydney and settled in England, where she wrote poetry for the *Irish Statesman*. The *Statesman's* editor, George William Russell (aka Æ), introduced Travers to William Butler Yeats and other Irish poets, who encouraged her. While reviewing drama for *The New English Weekly*, Travers published a travelogue, *Moscow Excursion* (1934), and *Mary Poppins* later that year. Walt Disney spent 20 years convincing Travers to sell him the film rights to *Mary Poppins* and finally succeeded in 1961. Travers, an advisor on

the film, sparred with Disney on various production details and was unhappy with the final cut. Although Travers disliked the film, it made her quite a bit of money. When she died in London at age 96, she was worth millions.

/ OTHER WORKS

Mary Poppins is the first of an 8-book series, published over the course of 50-plus years. Other titles include: *Mary Poppins Comes Back* (1935), *Mary Poppins Opens the Door* (1943), *Mary Poppins in the Park* (1952), *Mary Poppins From A to Z* (1963), *Mary Poppins in the Kitchen* (1975), *Mary Poppins in Cherry Tree Lane* (1982), *Mary Poppins and the House Next Door* (1988).



CHILDREN'S FANTASY

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

written by C.S. LEWIS

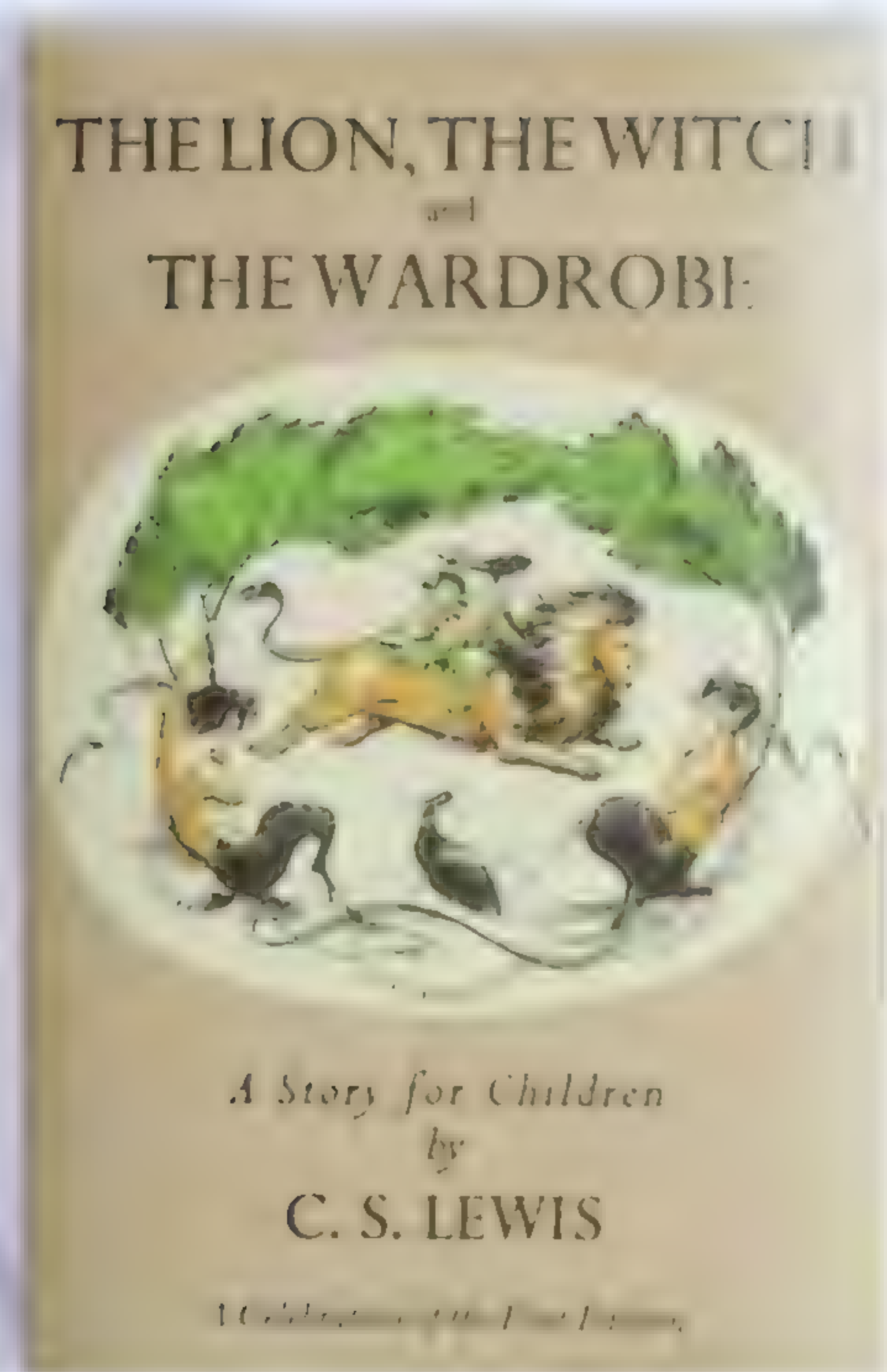
Stuck in a lonely house at a bleak time, cut off from family and friends, a band of children stumble upon a door into a secret world behind that most prosaic of furniture items, a wardrobe. This is the irresistible setup of C.S. Lewis' 1950 children's classic, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The Oxbridge English

professor's most famous book, part of the seven-volume *Chronicles of Narnia*, served as the literary spark that ignited dozens of contemporary fantasies, from *The Magicians* to *Harry Potter*, with a child who suddenly discovers that magic exists. While the fauns, witches and talking beavers who populate Narnia are utterly charming, it's the mysterious lion Aslan that gives the book its real thrill. "Safe?" says Mr. Beaver of Aslan. "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good." In Aslan, Lewis created a Christ-like figure who pays the penalty for one of the children's infractions and thus breaks the White Witch's wintry grip on Narnia. The book, which has religious themes that some find heavy-handed, has been criticized for its portrayal of women and the way the children's lives end (among other things). It's not a fairy tale, but it's good. —*Belinda Luscombe*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Clive Staples Lewis was born in 1898 in Belfast, Ireland, into a household that valued education. His father was a solicitor and his mother, who died when Lewis was just a boy, was the first female

mathematics graduate from Queen's University Belfast. Lewis was baptized in the Church of Ireland, became an atheist as a teen, and converted back to Christianity in his early 30s. Lewis received a scholarship to University College, Oxford, and enrolled in 1917, where he joined the Officers' Training Corps; months later, the British Army sent him to France to fight in WWI, where he was injured and discharged in 1918. He returned to Oxford and took an academic position at Magdalen College, where he remained until 1954. J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, was an Oxford colleague and friend. Lewis also served as chair of the literature department at Magdalene College, Cambridge from 1954 until he resigned for health reasons in 1963. Lewis died on November 22, 1963, the same day President John F. Kennedy Jr. was assassinated.



FOLKTALE

THE PALM-WINE DRINKARD

written by **AMOS TUTUOLA**

In 1950, Amos Tutuola, a 30-year-old Nigerian, read a magazine and decided he could write too. He drafted what would become *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, and sent it as a response to a “manuscripts wanted” ad put out by Lutheran World Press, a Christian publisher. A year later, Faber & Faber, one of the preeminent publishers of English literature, sent him a letter inquiring about publishing it. Soon after, it appeared in print across the U.K. and the U.S. At the time, it was unlike anything English-language readers had ever seen; even today, it’s bracingly original in its voice and ideas. The story’s protagonist and narrator is an alcoholic with God-like thirst and resilience: He drinks 225 kegs of palm wine a day, and that is all he does. The inciting incident of the novel is that his “tapster” dies, and there is no longer anyone to get him all the palm wine he desires. So, the narrator sets off to seek the Deads’ Town, where he believes he can find his tapster, now in his post-life form, and bring him back to his village so he can return to his life of drinking transcendent amounts of booze. Along the way is a sort of picaresque of the grotesque, where the narrator encounters monsters, (mostly malicious) magical beings and all sorts of incarnations of death and destruction. Tutuola, writing at a moment when the Yoruba culture he was born into was colliding with that of British Colonialism and Christian proselytism, weaves in aspects of the new West African modernity with Yoruba myth and oral storytelling so seamlessly you could blink and miss it. And the language, too, feels unique to the moment: Tutuola uses the Colonial British he learned in Anglican school to create a more propulsive and energetic version of English to tell the stories of West Africa. —*Elijah Wolfson*

/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Amos Olatubosun Tutuola was born in a small farming village in Nigeria in 1950, the son of cocoa farmers. When he was just 7 years old, he became a servant for a man who sent him to school in lieu of paying him wages. His schooling was limited to only six years, but remarkably, all of Tutuola’s novels are written in English. Initially, many Western critics dismissed his first novel, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, calling it “primitive.” The *New York Times Book Review* said, “...Tutuola is not a revolutionist of the word, not a mathematician, not a surrealist. He is a true primitive.” Years later, the work was much more appreciated for its unique literary style.



CHILDREN'S FANTASY

THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER

written by C.S. LEWIS

While *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* might be the most famous book in C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia series, one could argue that *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* tells the most adventurous story of them all. No longer strangers to the land of Narnia, the youngest Pevensie children, Edmund and Lucy, get whisked back to the magical land with their extremely irritating cousin Eustace Scrubb. Rather than being summoned to save the world from existential peril as in the series' first book, Edmund and Lucy instead join up to help King Caspian fulfill his vow to search for the missing Seven Lords of Narnia. With those more relaxed stakes, the book takes the children and the reader on a delightfully creative adventure, where each new stop along the way only deepens the fantasy and mystery. Along their journey, they meet dragons and merpeople, encounter dangerous curses and more. Though it's a more

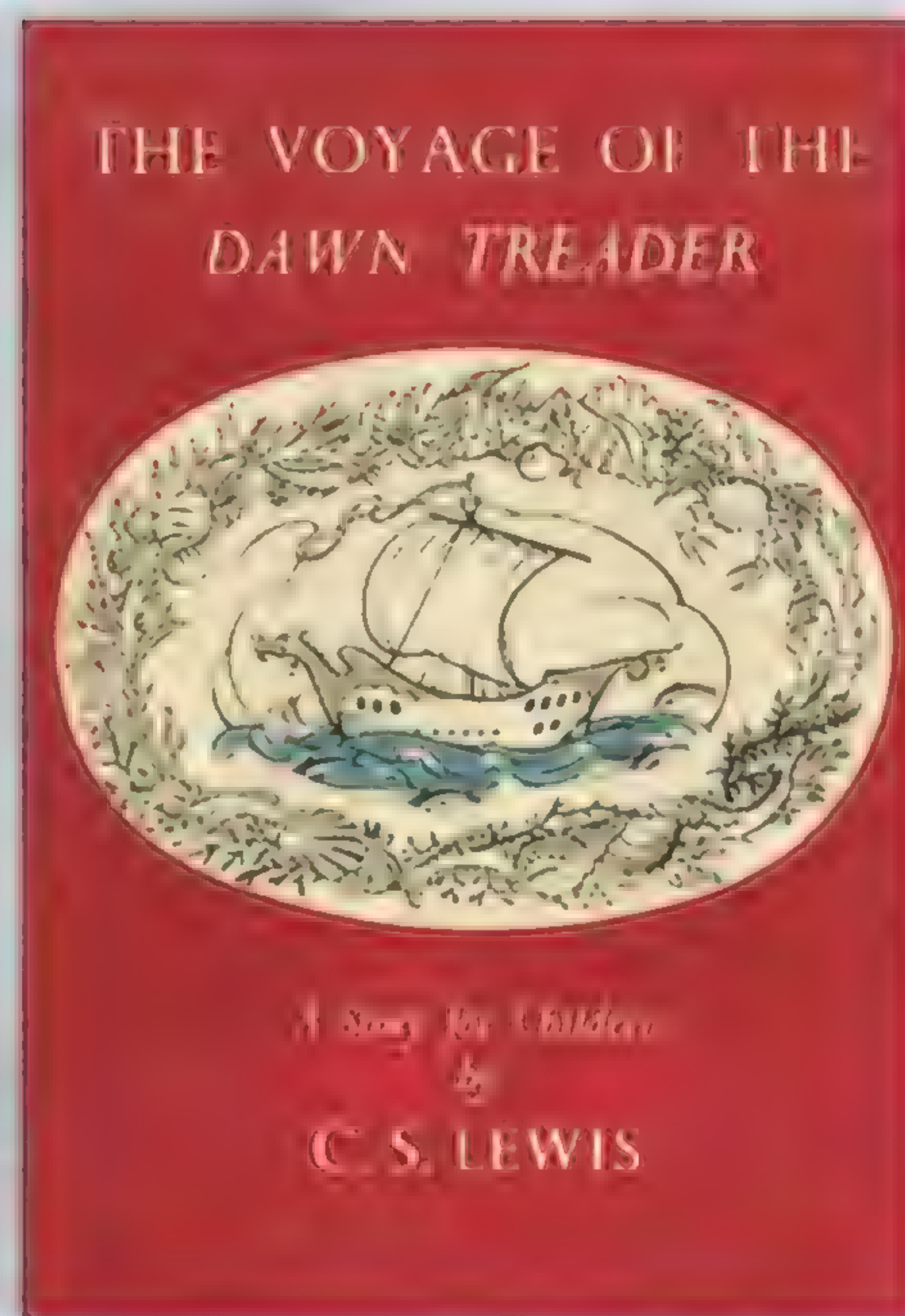
carefree reading experience, the book also explores themes of sacrifice, personal responsibility and commitment, and like the *Chronicles* before it, maturity. The novel succeeds most on its ability to instill a sense of wonder, adventure, bravery and heart in pursuing a dream and fulfilling a promise. —*Peter Allen Clark*

/ ADAPTATIONS A stage version premiered at Newcastle Playhouse in 1985, BBC TV aired a miniseries in 1989, BBC Radio produced a radio play in 1994, and the BG Touring Theatre put on a stage version at the 2006 Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Perhaps

best known is the 2010 feature film, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, distributed by 20th Century Fox. Songwriters Joni Mitchell and Charlotte Hatherley have both used the name of the vessel in a song title.

/ OTHER WORKS

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader is the third in Lewis' seven-book series *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The others are: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), *Prince Caspian* (1951), *The Silver Chair* (1953), *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), *The Magician's Nephew* (1955) and *The Last Battle* (1956).



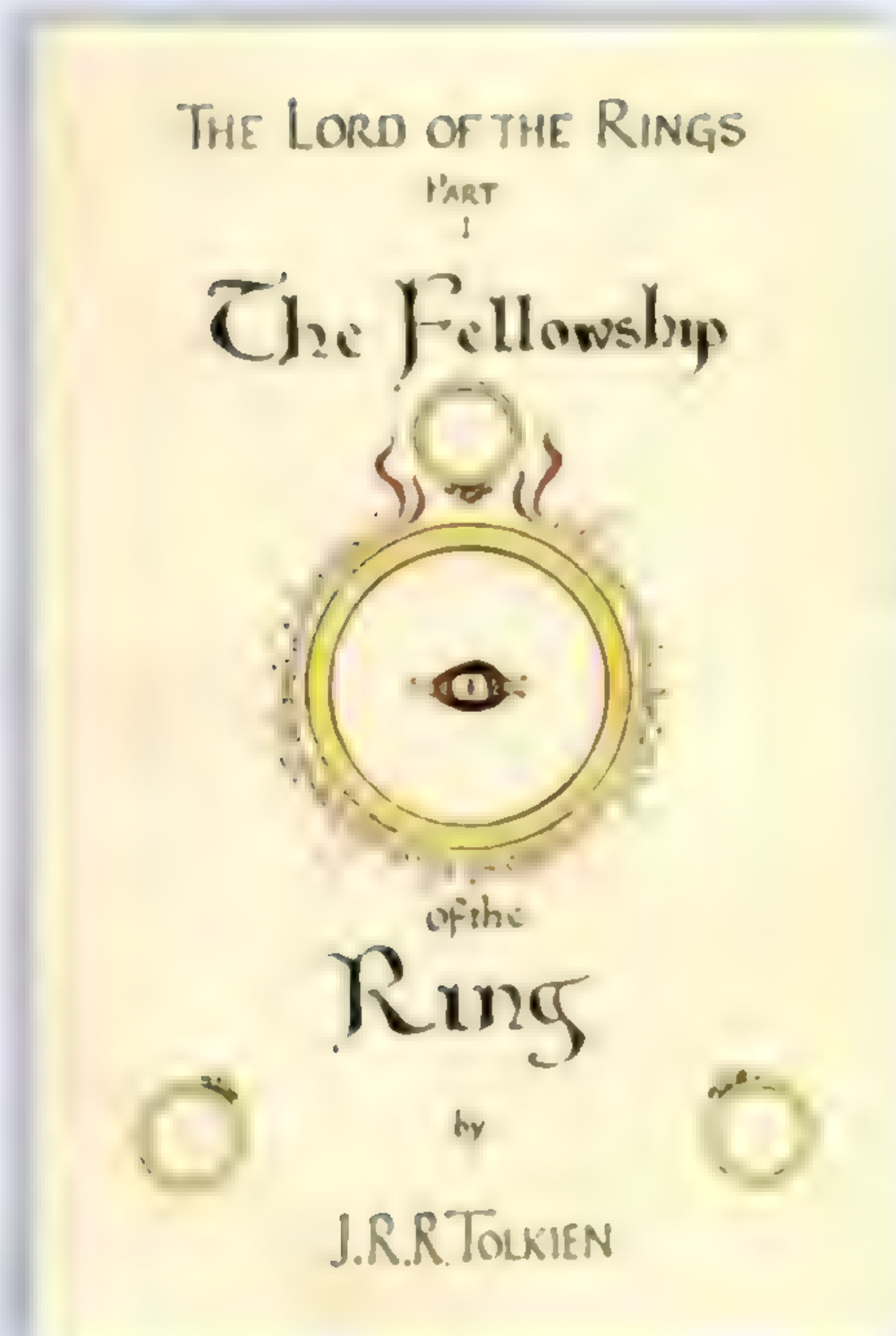
HIGH FANTASY

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

written by J.R.R. TOLKIEN

“One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all, and in the darkness bind them.” So reads the inscription on the accursed Ring of Power, the mythical object at the center of J.R.R. Tolkien’s monumental tale of good versus evil. Heavily influenced by the author’s experiences as a British soldier during World War I, *The Lord of the Rings*, while a story about wizards, elves, dwarves and, of course, hobbits, is also a profound meditation on

the indomitable power of hope. That one so small as Frodo Baggins should undertake a quest to carry the Ring to the deadly realm of Mordor in the face of near insurmountable odds is one of Tolkien’s greatest marks on the high fantasy subgenre (of which he’s widely considered the father). The saga—a single novel divided into three volumes starting with *The Fellowship of the Ring*—begins in hobbit country on the day of the eleventy first birthday party of Bilbo Baggins, the uncle of Frodo who has been in possession of the Ring for 60-some years. From there, *The Fellowship of the Ring* traces the epic quest of Frodo, fellow hobbits Sam, Merry and Pippin, and eventually, the five additional members of the Fellowship—the company tasked with accompanying the newly appointed Ring-bearer on his journey. The first volume launches them on their trek from Middle-earth’s mightiest peaks to its deepest caverns as the forces of the dark lord Sauron seek to reclaim their master’s ultimate weapon. —**Megan McCluskey**



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born in 1892 in what is now South Africa. When Tolkien was three, his mother took him to England on what was supposed to be a temporary trip, but Tolkien’s father died while they

were away, leaving his mother with no income. They moved in with his mother’s parents in Birmingham. Tolkien’s mother died when he was 12, and she, a devout Catholic, left Tolkien and his brother under the guardianship of a Catholic priest whose faith had a profound influence on the boys. In his teens, Tolkien was exposed to constructive language and eventually created his own. He finished schooling at Exeter College, Oxford, before enlisting in the British Army in 1915, where he saw combat on the Western Front until he contracted trench fever and was sent back to England for light duty while he recovered. After the war, he worked for the Oxford English Dictionary and held some academic posts before returning to Oxford in 1945 until his retirement in 1959.

My Life in the Bush of Ghosts
by Amos Tutuola



FOLKTALE

MY LIFE IN THE BUSH OF GHOSTS

written by AMOS TUTUOLA

In 1954, the Nigerian writer Amos Tutuola published *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, uniquely synthesizing the Yoruba culture he was born into with that of the British and Christian colonialism under which he matured into adulthood. The book, Tutuola's second, tells the story of a West African child who is forced for 24 years to navigate an incomprehensible wilderness filled with fantastical beings, most of whom are, as the title suggests, some form of ghost. It's a striking work of syncretism, recontextualizing previously unrecorded West African mythology by imbuing it with symbols of what was at the time a new global modernity. Consider, for example, one of the key figures of the novel: the "television-handed ghostess," who convinces the narrator to follow the sorcerers' advice and lick his open wound—by opening her hands and revealing TV screens on her palms showing footage of the narrator's family and home village. Tutuola would go on to inspire Talking Heads frontman David Byrne and superproducer Brian Eno to record a 1981 album by the same title as this book; it's a testament to his impact, as arguably the first international artist to form a new language by sampling the folk traditions of the global south and the modern imagery of the industrialized West. —*Elijah Wolfson*

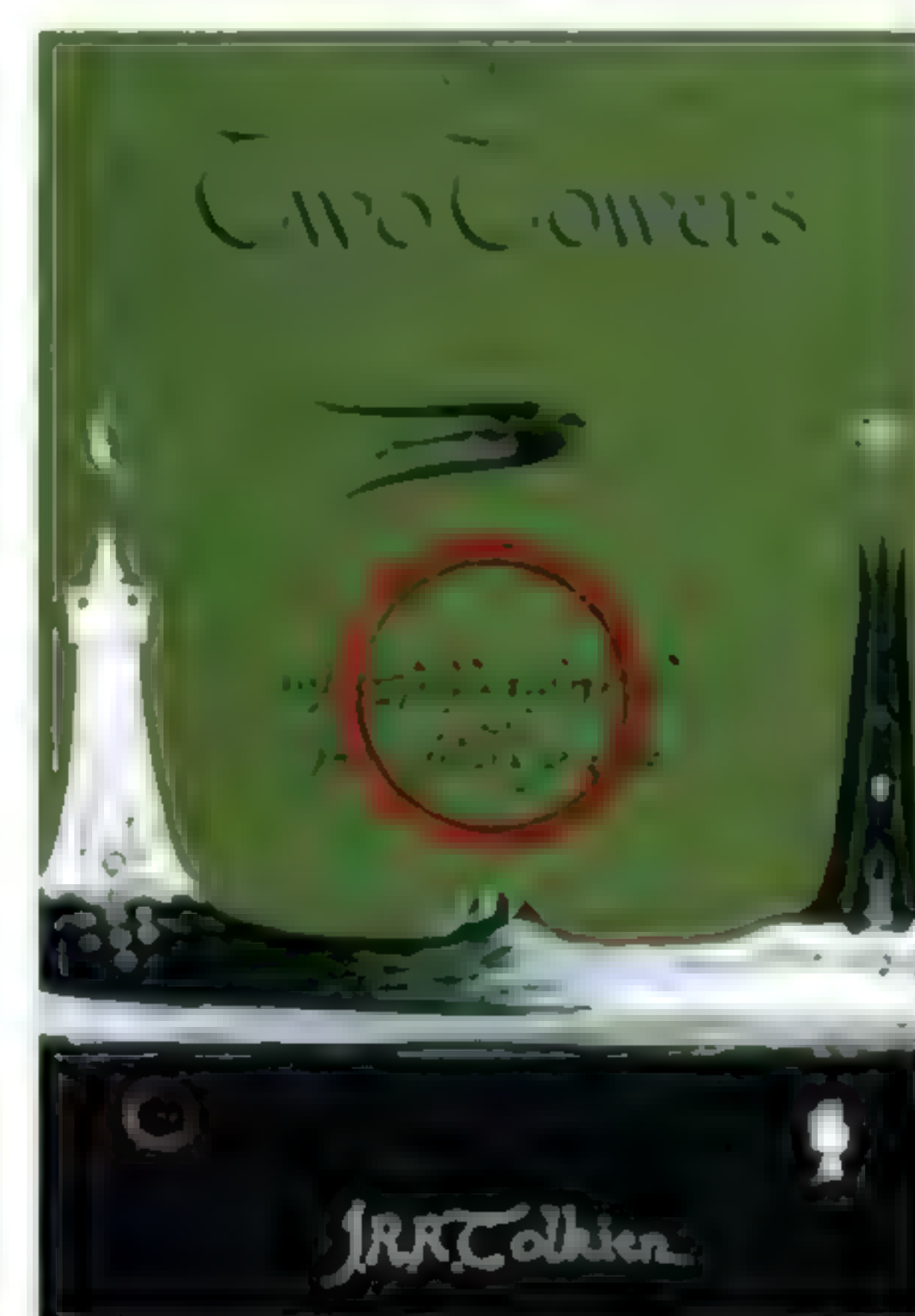
HIGH FANTASY

THE TWO TOWERS

written by J.R.R. TOLKIEN

The archetypal fantasy epic that is *The Lord of the Rings* continues in a second installment that masterfully ups the ante in Frodo's quest to destroy the One Ring while simultaneously fleshing out the rich history and languages of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth. Following the disbanding of the Fellowship, warrior trio Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli set off to rescue captured hobbits Merry and Pippin from the dark wizard Saruman's clutches as war looms. Meanwhile, Ring-bearers Frodo and Sam venture deeper into enemy territory and are joined by an unlikely companion along the way. *The Two Towers* bypasses the dreaded middle-of-the-saga slump, a common problem for fantasy series, with a grand-scale battle between the Horse-lords of the kingdom of Rohan and Saruman's army of Uruk-hai, an elite breed of the goblin-like creatures known as orcs. It's a fight that more than rivals the final showdowns of many series that came after Tolkien's.

—*Megan McCluskey*



HIGH FANTASY

THE RETURN OF THE KING

written by J.R.R. TOLKIEN

The powerful conclusion to *The Lord of the Rings* adventure not only earned the three-part novel the 1957 International Fantasy Award and the top spot in a 2003 survey conducted by the BBC to determine British readers' best-loved novel of all time. It also cemented its present-day standing as the gold standard of the fantasy genre, having influenced countless authors since its publication. At once triumphant and heartbreaking, the third volume of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth magnum opus picks up with the armies of good preparing to make a desperate last stand against the overwhelming forces of evil under the control of the dark lord Sauron's Great Eye. But things are even bleaker on the far side of Mordor's Black Gate, where the burden of the One Ring weighs ever heavier on Frodo as he and Sam edge closer to destroying it. Nearly 50 years after the saga was published, Peter Jackson's three-

part, live-action movie adaptation was crowned the winningest franchise in Academy Awards history when its final installment picked up the award for Best Picture (along with 10 others), becoming the first fantasy film to ever do so. —*Megan McCluskey*

/ **ADAPTATIONS** Nearly 50 years after, there have been many, but none on par with Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*, which was released over three consecutive Decembers, 2001 to 2003. It is ranked as one of the greatest

film trilogies ever made, grossing nearly \$3 billion worldwide. It garnered 30 Oscar nominations, winning 17. *TIME*'s film critic, Richard Corliss, put the trilogy on his "All-TIME 100 Movies" list in 2010, writing, "What remains amazing about the enterprise is that, over seven years of planning, production and digital effects work, Jackson kept his eye on the prize, never losing the epic heft or stinting on the telling visual or character detail. It's wonderful when moviemakers dream this big, and make their dreams ours."



HISTORICAL FANTASY

A HERO BORN

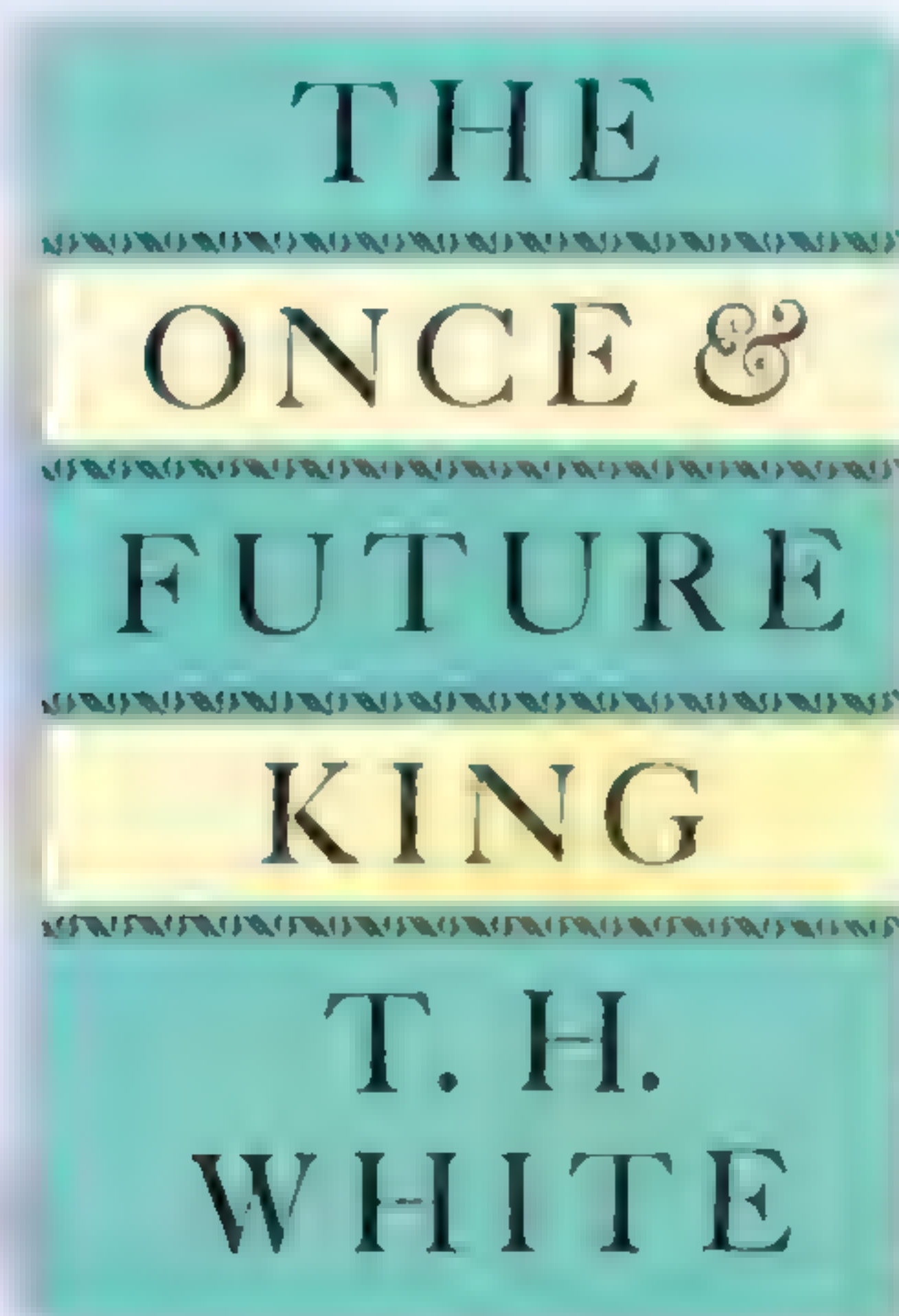
written by JIN YONG

The Chinese wuxia genre is a testament to the breadth of the fantasy genre, with stories that typically follow martial artists' adventures while exploring the intersection between supernatural abilities, otherworldly creatures and China's long history. One of the greatest, and most popular, wuxia works of the 20th century was Jin Yong's *Condor Trilogy*, the

first book of which is *A Hero Born*. First released in serial form in 1957, *A Hero Born* takes place during the 12th-century Jin-Song Wars and follows the sons of two dedicated allies forced to go their separate ways. One son is raised by Genghis Khan and the other by a Jurchen prince. The two, with their different personalities and martial arts styles, take radically different paths that place them on opposite ends of China's history. Jin Yong's *Condor Trilogy*, which has been called the Chinese *Lord of the Rings*, has spawned numerous TV and film adaptations. Since its original release, the *Condor Trilogy* has rarely been translated into English. That changed in 2018, when publisher MacLehose Press began releasing the works, newly translated by Anna Holmwood, into a series of 12 volumes. Four volumes have been released so far, bringing one of fantasy's best stories to a new generation. —*Peter Allen Clark*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Jin Yong was born Louis Cha Leung-yung to a scholarly family in the Republic of China in 1924. His father, who read him wuxia stories every day when he was a boy, was executed by the Communist government in the early 1950s for being a counterrevolutionary. He was later exonerated. As a teen, Cha was expelled from school for writing satire about a staff member but eventually graduated and began a career as a journalist, writer, and screenwriter. He co-founded the daily newspaper *Ming Pao* in 1959 with a high-school classmate, where he served as editor-in-chief. Between 1955 and 1972, Cha wrote 15 works and is considered a pioneer in the wuxia genre and one of its greatest and most popular writers. He died in Hong Kong in 2018 at age 94.



HISTORICAL FANTASY

THE ONCE & FUTURE KING

written by **T.H. WHITE**

Widely considered the definitive modern retelling of the medieval saga of *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table*, T.H. White's collection of Arthurian tales brings 20th-century insight to the rise and fall of the mythical kingdom of Camelot. Beginning with the legend of "The Sword in the Stone," White offers a comical yet deeply sad portrayal of Arthur's life, from his childhood training with the wizard Merlyn all the way through the morning of his tragic final battle. The narrative serves as a post-World War II allegory for the ways in which power and violence shape both individuals and societies. White's work is populated by the likes of such famous literary figures as Robin Hood, Morgan le Fay and, of course, Lancelot and Guenever, whose illicit love affair provides the axis on which the epic turns. —*Megan McCluskey*

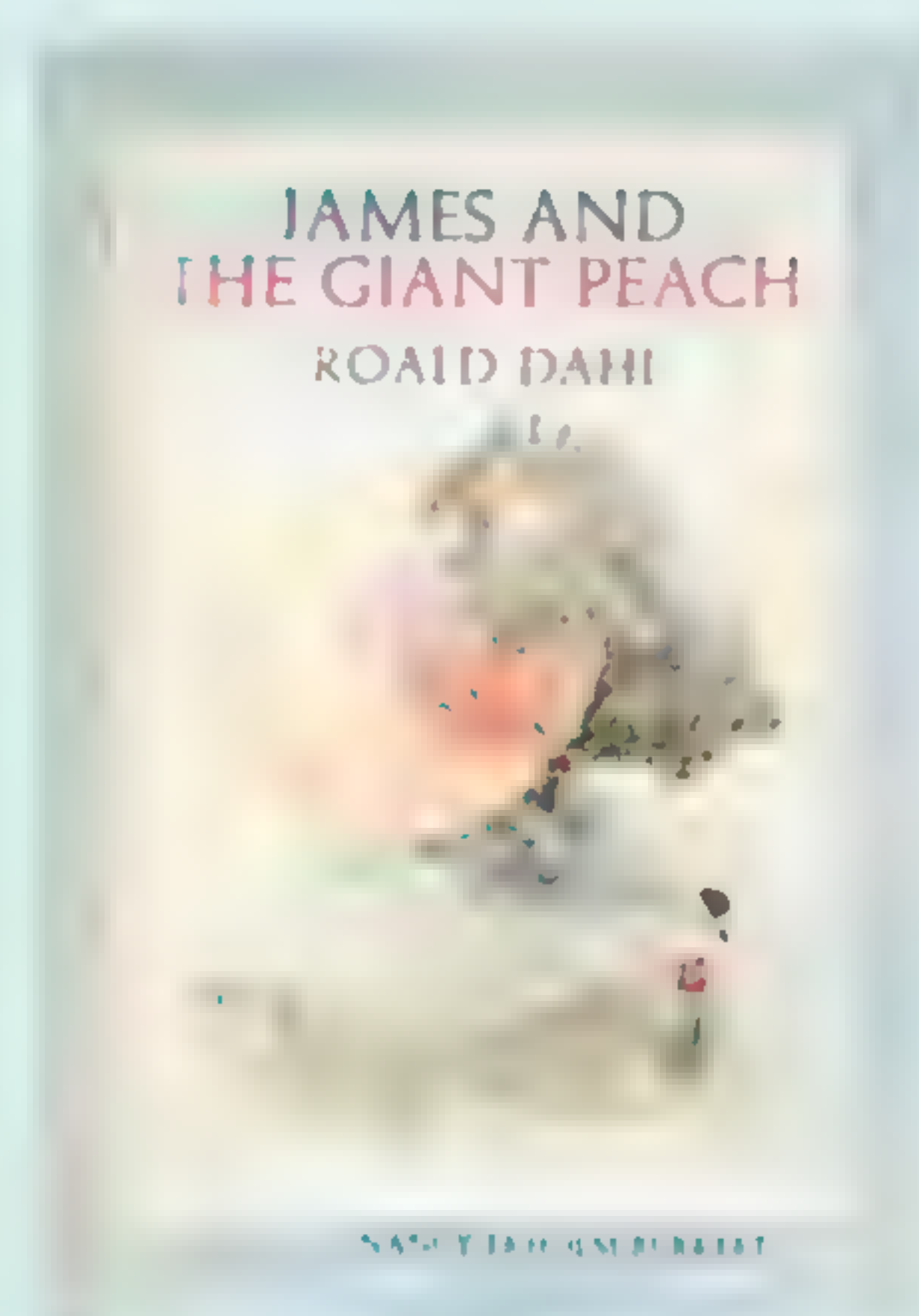
/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Terence Hanbury White was born in 1906 in Mumbai (then a part of British India) into a troubled household. He graduated from Queen's College, Cambridge, in 1928, and taught at the prestigious Stowe School for a few years, writing during the summers until he became a full-time author after the publication of his well-received memoir, *England Have My Bones*. White lived out WWII in Ireland as a conscientious objector, and later moved to the Channel Islands, where he wrote for the remainder of his life. White, a lifelong bachelor, died in 1964 aboard a ship on his way home from a U.S. lecture tour. He was 57.

CHILDREN'S FANTASY

JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH

written by **ROALD DAHL**

Enormous talking insects, evil aunts and one larger-than-life piece of fruit take the lead in Roald Dahl's fantastical tale of a lonely young boy finding his place in the world. While Dahl's reputed anti-Semitism has raised questions about his legacy as an author in the years since his death, *James and the Giant Peach* remains a favorite among kids and parents alike nearly 60 years after it was first published, thanks to its vivid imagery, vibrant characters and forthright exploration of mature themes like death and hope. Readers around the world can join 7-year-old James Henry Trotter, rascalion Centipede, misunderstood Miss Spider and the rest of the titular peach's distinctly eccentric occupants on a journey unlike any other. —*Megan McCluskey*

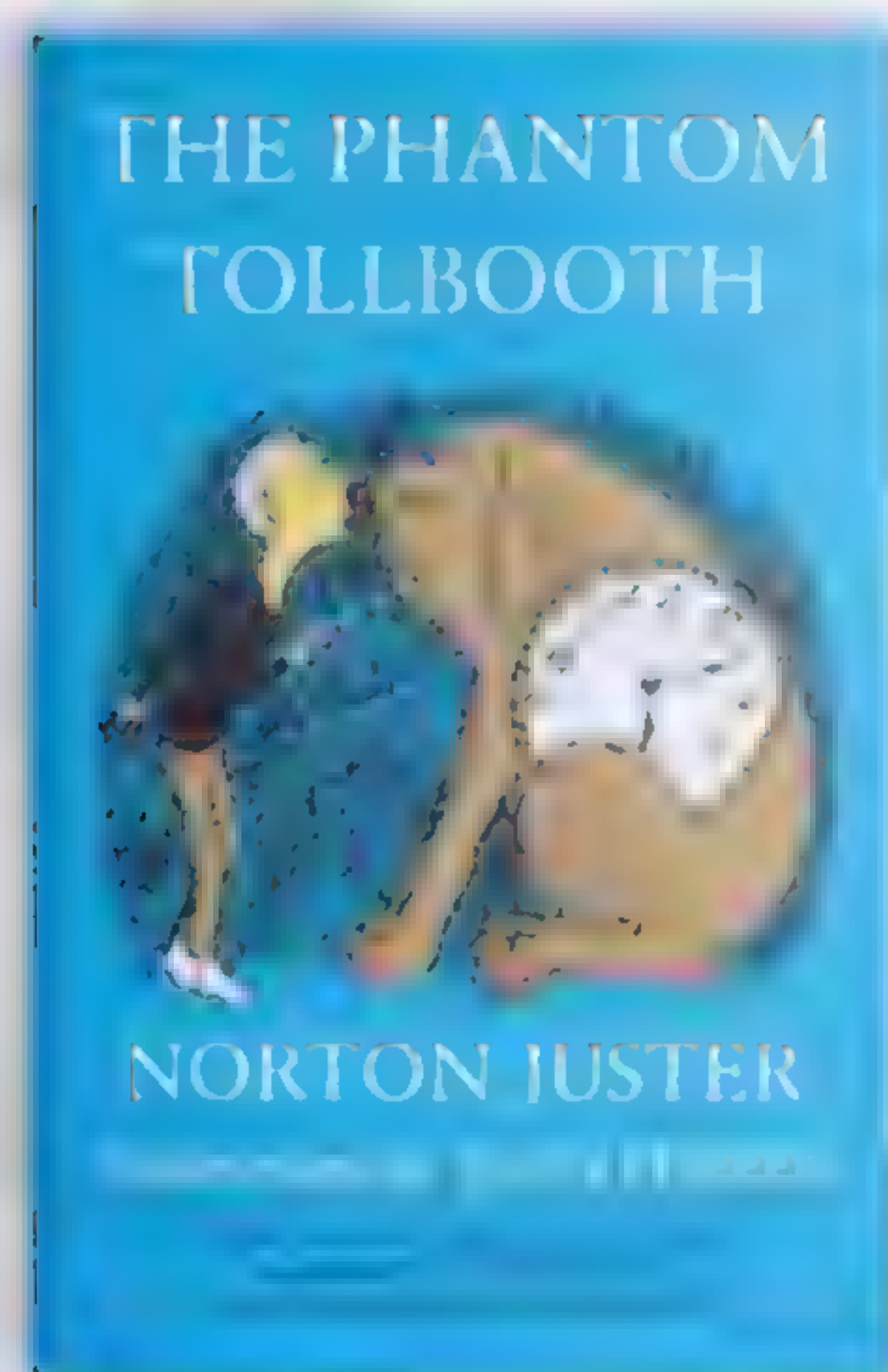
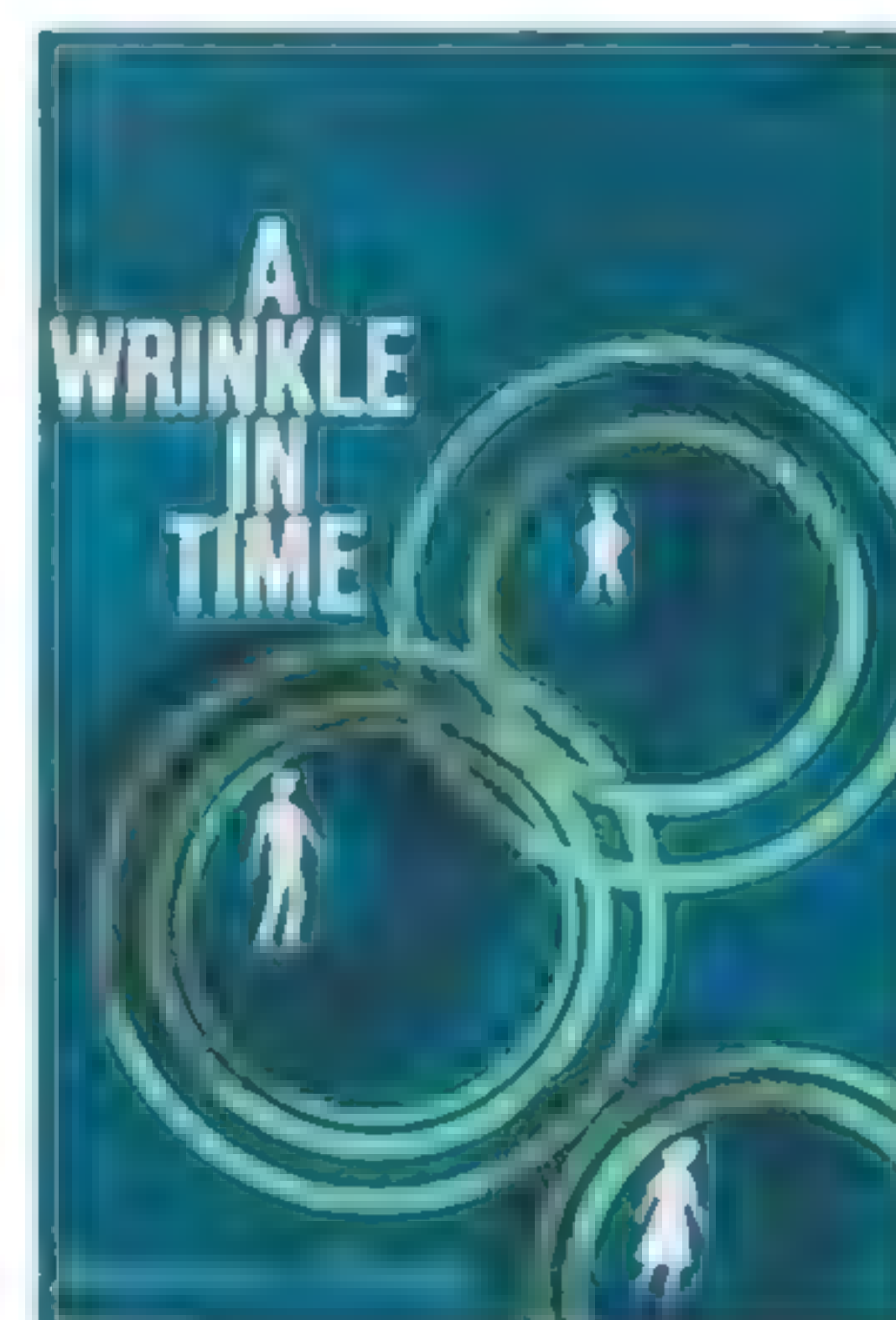


SCIENCE FICTION

A WRINKLE IN TIME

written by **MADELEINE L'ENGLE**

At the intersection of adolescence and magic is transformation—and transformation happens to be the subject of this classic young-adult novel, which fuses an imaginative fantasy plot, timeless coming-of-age themes and mind-expanding ideas drawn from scrupulous study of science, literature and spirituality. Titan of the genre Madeleine L'Engle gave precocious readers (especially girls, a chronically underserved demographic for fantasy lit) an avatar in Meg Murry, a brilliant but hapless preteen outcast who struggles in school, battles bullies and longs to be reunited with her physicist father who mysteriously disappeared. Meg's quest to find him takes her, her little brother Charles Wallace and her schoolmate Calvin on an interdimensional journey that reveals the dangers of conformity. By the end of this hugely influential book, which won a Newbery Medal in 1963 and came to the big screen in a lavish 2018 adaptation directed by Ava DuVernay, Meg has been transformed into a happier, more confident person. And it's embracing what makes her different that gets her there. —*Judy Berman*



CHILDREN'S FANTASY

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

written by **NORTON JUSTER**

After a perpetually bored young boy named Milo drives his toy car through the tollbooth that's mysteriously appeared in his bedroom, he's transported to the Kingdom of Wisdom, a magical land divided by a feud over whether letters or numbers are more important. Aided by his newfound companions, Tock the watchdog (a trusty pup with the body of an alarm clock) and the braggadocious Humbug, Milo must journey to the Castle in the Air to rescue the realm's exiled princesses, Rhyme and Reason, on a quest that teaches him the true joy of learning. Norton Juster has described his debut novel as an "accidental masterpiece" that was inspired by his own childhood ennui. Accidental or not, the book (and 1970 animated film adaptation) have helped generations of children keep the doldrums at bay. —*Megan McCluskey*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Norton Juster was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1929, the son of Romanian immigrants. After a stint with the U.S. Navy Civil Engineer Corps, he set up shop as an architect in New York. He continued his career in architecture until he retired in the 1990s. Juster's spark for *The Phantom Tollbooth* came when a child approached him in a

restaurant and asked, "What's the biggest number there is?" Their subsequent banter reminded Juster how he pondered life's mysteries as a child. He died in 2021 at age 91.

ROMANTIC FANTASY

THE WANDERING UNICORN

written by **MANUEL MUJICA LAINEZ**

For centuries, the medieval fairy Melusine has been depicted in prose and art. Many stories revolve around her husband's fateful discovery that Melusine has the lower body of a serpent. In *El unicornio*—titled *The Wandering Unicorn* in a 1982 English-language translation by Mary Fitton—Argentinean writer Manuel Mujica Lainez expands Melusine's story. Mujica Lainez follows Melusine as she falls in love and witnesses many battles across medieval Europe during the crusades. Though contemporary readers might find its approach to Islam and depiction of Asian cultures to be dated, the novel contains vivid imagery and exhaustive world-building, deftly intertwining historical and magical threads. Its epic sweep, embrace of tragedy and final twist make it worthwhile for fans of Arthurian legends and other medieval tales.

—*Andrew R. Chow*

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Manuel Mujica Lainez was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1910 to aristocratic parents. He was educated in Argentina, England, and France, and took a job at the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación* as a literary and art critic, where he worked throughout his life. He was a member of the Argentine Academy of Letters and the Academy of Fine Arts, and he received France's Legion of Honor in 1982. He was extremely popular in Europe and Latin America. Just as Fitton's translation of *The Wandering Unicorn* was becoming popular in the U.S., Mujica Lainez died at age 73.



SCIENCE FICTION

DRAGONFLIGHT

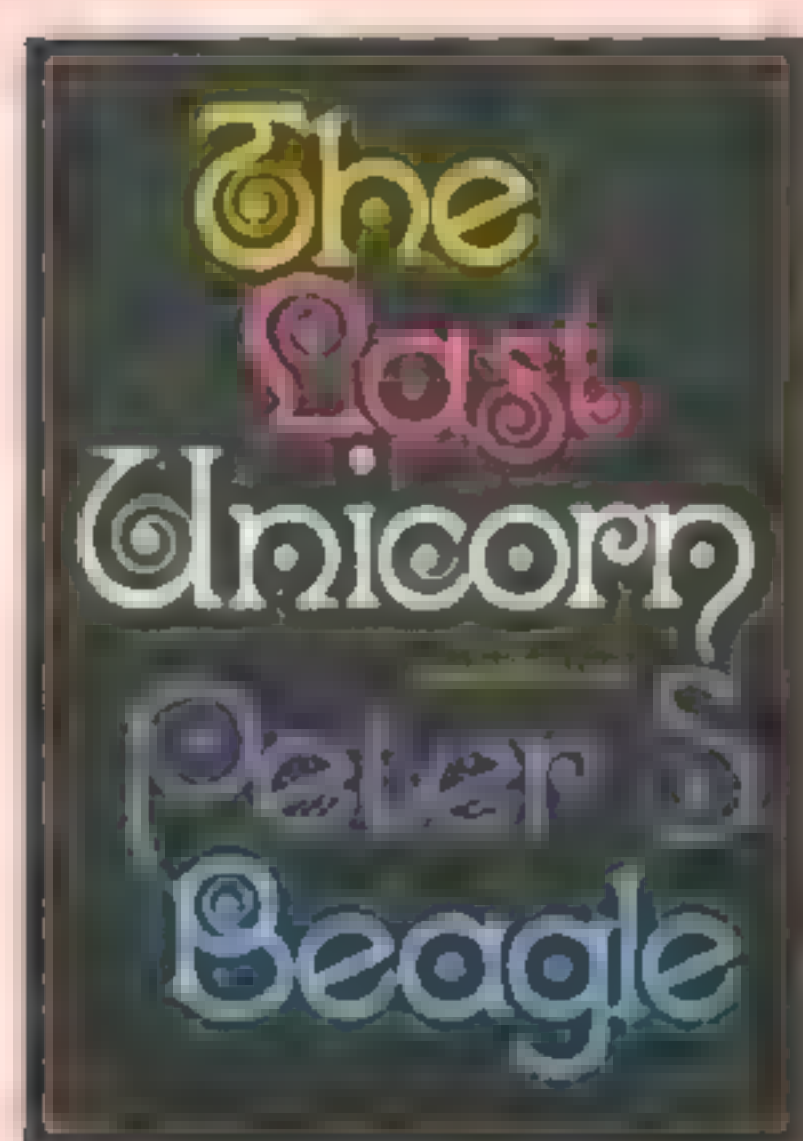
written by **ANNE MCCAFFREY**

Territorial disputes among landed gentry. A ruling class threatened by the increasing importance of skilled craftsmen. Swords and sandals. And, most importantly, fire-breathing dragons—along with the elite humans who can communicate, coordinate and commune with the legendary beasts. It's all basically Fantasy Novel Writing 101. But Anne McCaffrey, a trailblazing woman in the fantasy genre, subverts the genre in her 1968 novel by adding a science-fiction twist that makes it all seem much more raw, real and lived-in. It's no spoiler to note that the story takes place on a far-flung planet colonized by Earth and then forgotten, and the "dragons" are genetically modified versions of a native lizard-like species. To write the book, McCaffrey merged two of her previously written novellas: *Weyr Search*, which won a Hugo Award, and *Dragonrider*, which won a Nebula Award. Her impact is clear: it's hard to imagine *Game of Thrones* without *Dragonflight*. The series' central conceit—the recovery of a world where dragons, the most powerful of beings, have not yet faded into the history books—is the driving force of *Dragonflight*, published some 30 years before. —*Elijah Wolfson*

FAIRY TALE

THE LAST UNICORN

written by **PETER S. BEAGLE**



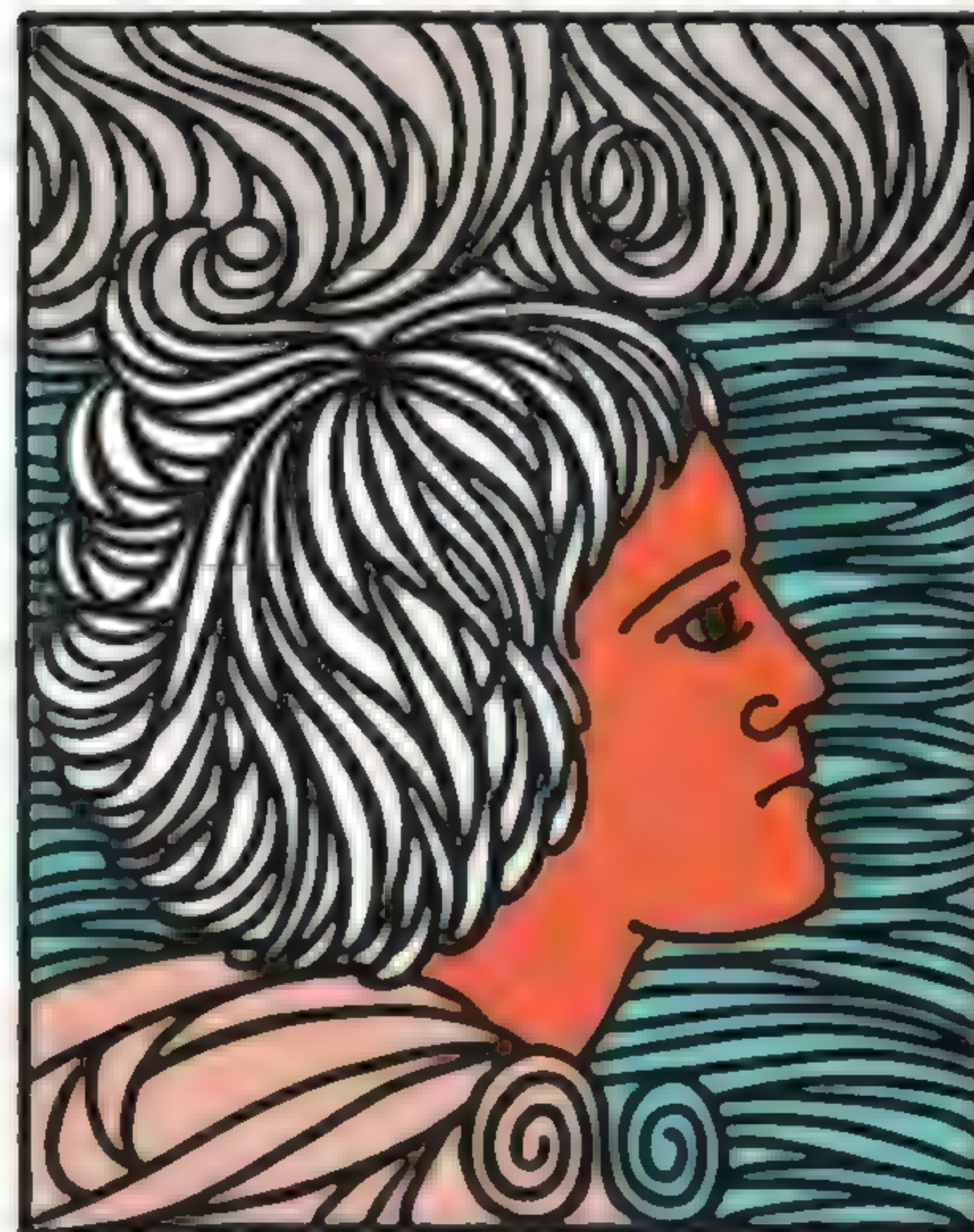
Upon learning that she may be the last of her kind in all the world, Peter S. Beagle's titular and nameless unicorn sets out from her enchanted lilac

wood to discover what the monstrous Red Bull has done to her immortal kin. With the help of Schmendrick, an inept magician, and Molly Grue, a rugged yet kindhearted Maid Marian figure, the unicorn journeys to the kingdom of the callous King Haggard, who bade the Red Bull imprison the unicorns in the sea outside his castle. The book's charm lies in the ways it defies fantasy convention. In this cult classic, written in lyrical prose and rife with both whimsical humor and philosophical ruminations on what it means to be human, Beagle spins a quasi-medieval fairy tale that remains timeless.

—Megan McCluskey

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Peter S. Beagle was born in 1939 and grew up in Bronx, New York. He won a Scholastic Art & Writing Awards scholarship to the University of Pittsburgh, where he majored in creative writing. He then got a Stenger Fellowship in creative writing at Stanford alongside Ken Kesey (*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*) and Larry McMurty (*Terms of Endearment*, *Lonesome Dove*). Beagle wrote his first novel at 19 and published his most recent book, *I'm Afraid You've Got Dragons*, in May 2024, when he was 85.

a wizard of earthsea



URSULA K. LE GUIN DRAWINGS BY RUTH ROBBINS

HIGH FANTASY

A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA

written by **URSULA K. LE GUIN**

Long before Harry Potter was accepted to Hogwarts, the first installment in the highly acclaimed six-book *Earthsea Cycle* series saw a young Ged sail to the heart of the series' titular archipelago—one of the most original fantasy worlds of its time—to study at the magical island of Roke's school of wizardry. It's there that Sparrowhawk, as Ged becomes known, makes a terrible mistake that haunts him for years on his path to becoming the greatest sorcerer in all the realm. In *Earthsea*, it's those who understand how to wield the power of words who are truly wise—a creed that Le Guin, who used her writing to subvert racist and sexist tropes often present in a genre historically dominated by white male authors, upheld in our own world. Le Guin would go on to win the Hugo, Nebula, Locus and World Fantasy awards (each more than once) later in her career, but it was the seminal book *A Wizard of Earthsea* that broke down barriers and provided a blueprint for countless beloved fantasy properties to come.

—Megan McCluskey



HIGH FANTASY

THE TOMBS OF ATUAN

written by **URSULA K. LE GUIN**

Although the wizard Ged plays a role in Ursula K. Le Guin's second *Earthsea* novel, at the center of this story is Tenar, a girl taken as a child from the Viking-like Kargish empire to become high priestess to the Nameless Ones (the ancient spirits of the titular tombs). Praised as a more revolutionary protagonist than her predecessor, Tenar—or Arha, the Eaten One, as she's forced to become—must reconsider everything she knows to be true about her endlessly lonely role as guardian of the tombs' sacred underground labyrinth. Only she may enter, but an unexpected stranger arrives to steal an invaluable treasure and it's up to her to stop him. The bulk of the action in *The Tombs of Atuan* takes place within the perpetually dark confines of the labyrinth, but it's Tenar's inner struggle against the social constructs that define her life that carries this Newbery Honor novel. —*Megan McCluskey*

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Ursula K. Le Guin was an American writer born in Berkeley, California, in 1929. She was the recipient of many awards, including eight Hugo Awards, six Nebula Awards, the National Book Award for Young People's Literature and the Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master Award. She died in 2018 in Portland, Oregon.

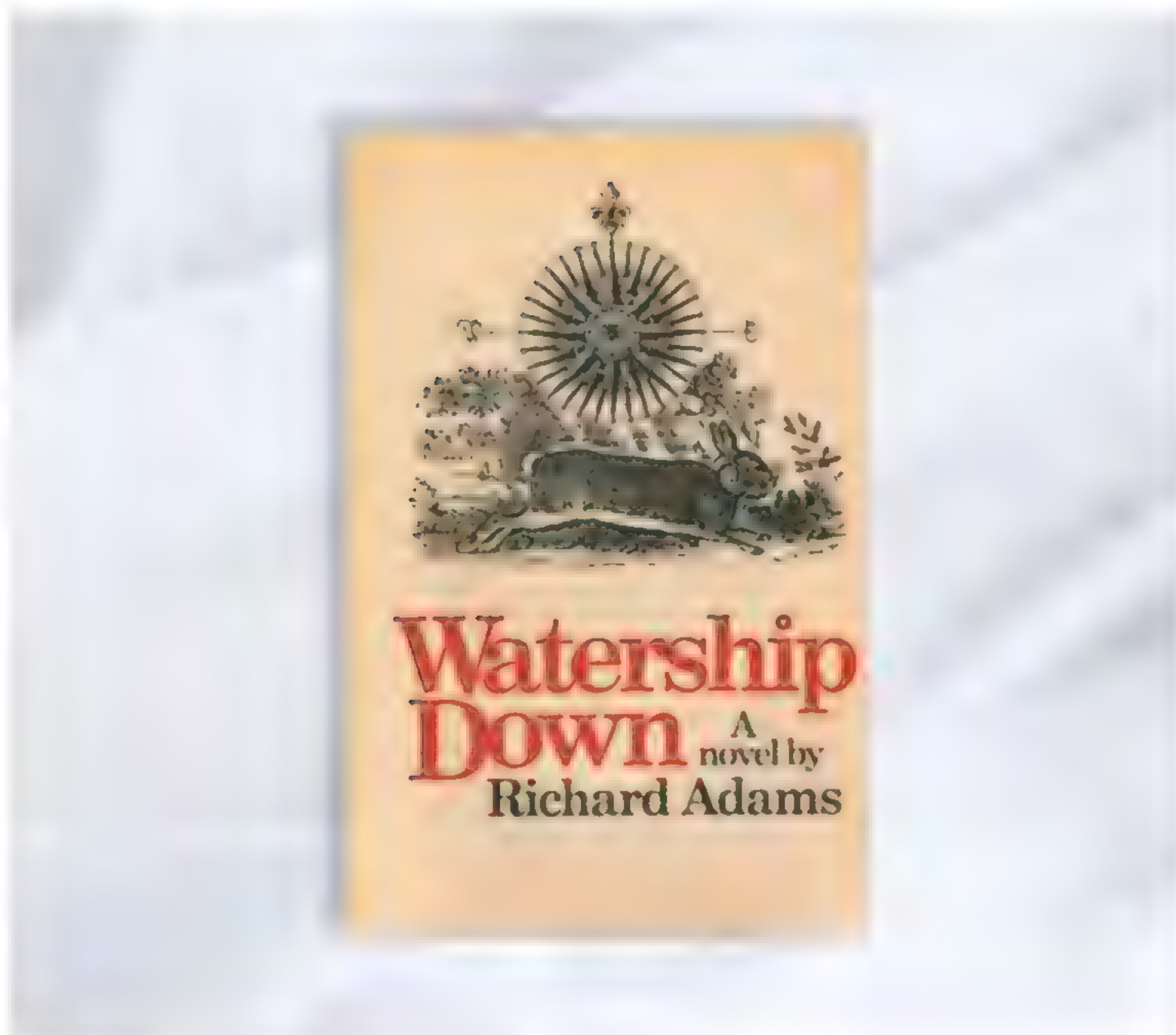
HISTORICAL FANTASY

THE CRYSTAL CAVE

written by **MARY STEWART**

Another update on the Arthurian legend—this time from the point of view of Camelot's resident magician—the first installment in Mary Stewart's *Merlin* trilogy follows the famed sorcerer in the years before he becomes King Arthur's most trusted adviser. Ostracized from a young age for his unknown parentage and strange precognitive abilities, Myrddin Emrys (or as he becomes known, Merlin) must hone his skills in medicine, engineering and, of course, sorcery, before finding his place in the turbulent world of 5th-century England. Even with so many Merlins that came before hers, Stewart manages to bring new depth to the legendary wizard as he works toward his crowning achievement, orchestrating Arthur's birth. —*Megan McCluskey*

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR In 1916, British writer Mary Stewart was born Mary Rainbow to a vicar father and a schoolteacher mother. She was sent to boarding school at age eight, where she was bullied. The experience shaped who she was, even after she achieved great success. She was very private and rarely gave interviews. Stewart was a teacher and lecturer by trade, but writing was her first love. Her husband, one of Britain's foremost scientists, encouraged her to write—he was knighted in 1974 making Stewart a Lady, but she never used the title. She died in 2014 at age 97.



ADVENTURE FANTASY

WATERSHIP DOWN

written by **RICHARD ADAMS**

Richard Adams's classic tale of escape, adventure and survival—winner of the 1972 Carnegie Medal in Literature and the 1973 Guardian Children's Fiction Prize—follows a group of rabbits as they flee a warren doomed by the encroachment of man. They head off in search of greener pastures and eventually settle on the hillside of Watership Down. Led by reluctant rabbit-in-chief Hazel, the budding colony must contend with various evil, the word for the thousand natural enemies of rabbits in Adams's inventive Lapine language, as they seek a home where they can finally live in peace. Although Adams's daughters, for whom he wrote the story, have said that he repeatedly disavowed any allegorical interpretations of his anthropomorphic fantasy—ranging from communism to Christianity—the late author didn't mince words when it came to a message about humanity's impact on the environment: "Men will never rest till they've spoiled the earth and destroyed the animals."

—*Megan McCluskey*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Richard Adams had a career in the British Civil Service when he published his first novel, *Watership Down*, at age 52. He first started telling rabbit tales to entertain his daughters on long car rides, and at their urging, he compiled them into a young adult book. It was an instant sensation and launched his literary career. Adams died in 2016 at age 96.

CHILDREN'S FANTASY

THE DARK IS RISING

written by **SUSAN COOPER**

It's a plot that might sound familiar: On his 11th birthday, a boy learns about his supernatural abilities and the existence of magic right under our human noses, and then has to search for a series of powerful objects in order to save the world. No, it's not Harry Potter—it's Will Stanton, who discovers that he is an Old One, an immortal being with a special role in the timeless struggle between Light and Dark. Cooper was at Oxford when both C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien taught there, and her work has been described as a bridge between their era and the young-adult fantasy epics of more recent decades. Blending Arthurian legend and time-travel trippiness, this 1973 classic for middle-grade readers stands out for an eldritch tone that matches its stormy winter setting. The novel, a Newbery Honor Book, is the second installment of a five-book sequence. —*Lily Rothman*

/ OTHER WORKS The other titles in *The Dark is Rising* series are *Over Sea, Under Stone* (1965), *Greenwitch* (1974), *The Grey King* (1975) and *Silver on the Tree* (1977).



ROMANTIC FANTASY

THE PRINCESS BRIDE

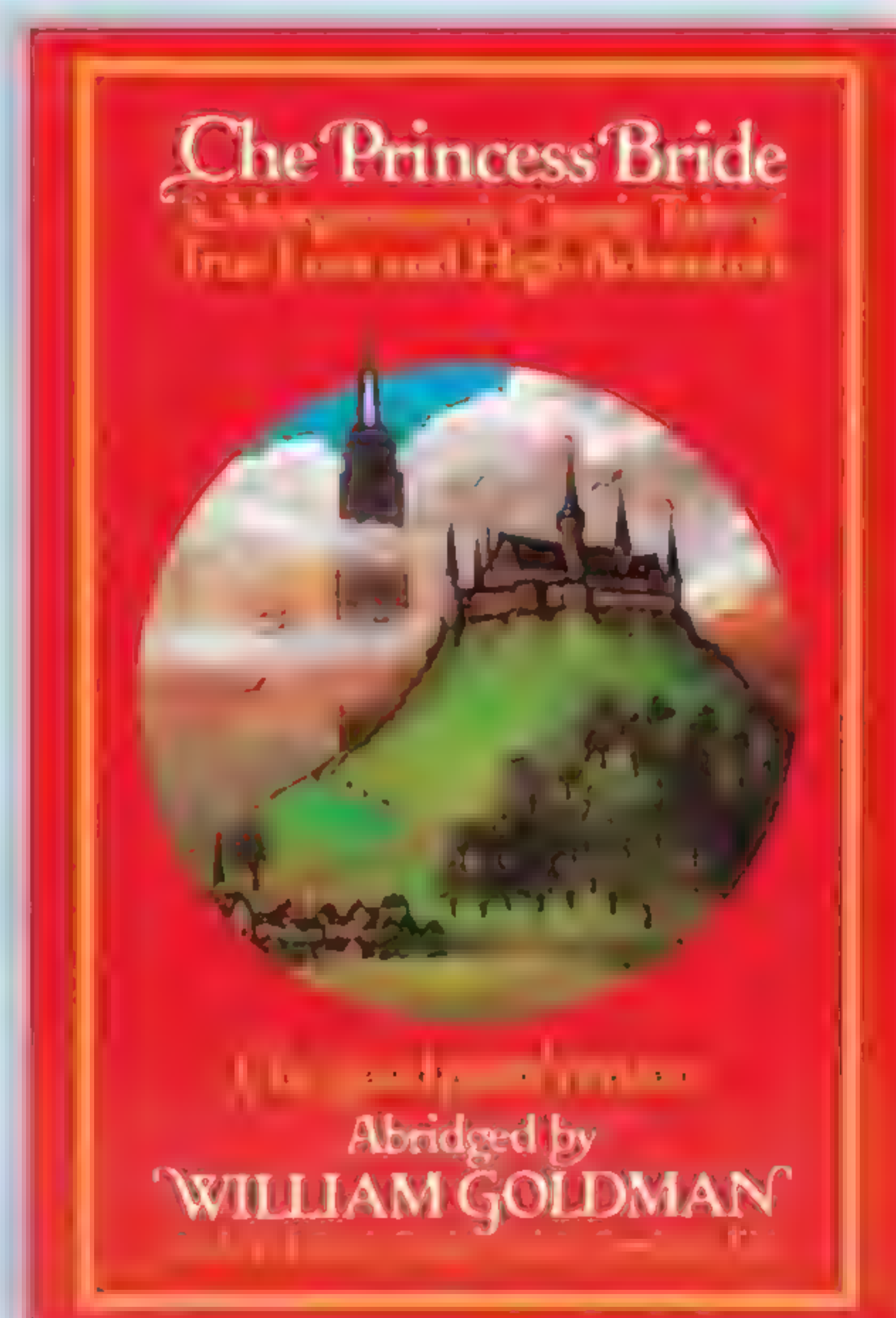
written by **WILLIAM GOLDMAN**

It might be “inconceivable” to separate William Goldman’s novel *The Princess Bride* from Rob Reiner’s satirical-yet-thrilling film adaptation. In both book and movie, the most beautiful woman in the world, Buttercup, finds herself betrothed to a malicious monarch. But she finds a savior in her long-lost love Westley, who braves the mystical fire swamp, fights a Rodent of Unusual Size (R.O.U.S.) and endures a torture machine in his pursuit. Westley teams with giant Fezzik and swordsman Inigo Montoya, who is bent on avenging his father’s death, for an epic showdown with the prince. But the movie loses the wry commentary of the novel’s narrator, Goldman himself. Goldman presents himself as an author excising the “boring bits” from a (made-up) old fairy tale, and he pauses at the end of each chapter to analyze the fantasy genre and reminisce about his own father telling him fantastical bedtime stories. The movie tries to capture this meta aspect by introducing a grandfather character reading to his sick grandson. And while that plot is sweet, fantasy fans will miss out on the more analytical and nostalgic aspects of Goldman’s work, in which he tells the reader exactly why we all love the story of Westley and Buttercup so much. —*Eliana Dockterman*



Despite surviving a tough childhood, including his father’s death by suicide and then getting the lowest grade in his college creative writing class, Chicago native William Goldman is became a legendary screenwriter. He was a two-time Oscar winner, taking Best Original Screenplay for *Butch Cassidy and the*

Sundance Kid in 1969 and Best Adapted Screenplay for *All the President’s Men* in 1976. He also wrote the screenplay for *The Princess Bride* (1987). His true love was writing novels, however, and he often said that he was not a screenwriter, but a novelist who wrote screenplays. Despite his success in the film industry, Goldman was a critic of the Hollywood scene. *Adventures in the Screen Trade* (1983) and *Which Lie Did I Tell?* (2000), his tell-alls about how his films were made, are considered industry classics. Goldman died in 2018 at age 87.



CHILDREN'S FANTASY

TUCK EVERLASTING

written by NATALIE BABBITT

Natalie Babbitt got the idea for her now-classic novel, *Tuck Everlasting*, from her four-year-old daughter. The girl was afraid of dying, so Babbitt wrote a story for young readers that faced death head-on. In it, young Winnie Foster comes to know a family, the Tucks, who have been granted the seemingly enviable but actually burdensome miracle of immortality after unknowingly drinking from a magical spring in the further reaches of her family's property. Saddled with a secret she must help to conceal as outsiders seek to profit off the powerful elixir, Winnie learns that it is the fact of life's ending that gives meaning to all that comes before. Babbitt's book won numerous awards, was adapted into two movies and a Broadway musical and has been translated into 27 languages. While its lessons hinge on its central fantastical element, its themes are grounded in some of the heaviest elements of reality people of all ages must confront. Its enduring meaning to readers nearly half a century later makes the case that children can and even yearn to grapple with darkness—that, indeed, denying their very real, very universal fears is far more frightening. —*Eliza Berman*

/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Dayton, Ohio native Natalie Babbitt had a knack for cutting through taboos and giving young readers whimsical stories through which to wrestle with their questions and fears. From her



Newberry Honor book *Knee-Knock Rise* (1970), which explored humankind's need for religion, to Tuck's grapplings with life and death, to Jack Plank's search for his true calling, she crafted read-aloud treasures that confronted what grown-ups often have trouble coming to terms with themselves. According to the *New York Times*, her adult novel *Herbert Rowbarger* (1982) was one of her personal favorites. In it, an amusement park owner wrestles with the feeling of not quite feeling whole despite finding great success. Interestingly, Babbitt didn't set out to be a writer—her first book credit was that of illustrator. She and her husband collaborated on a picture book, *The Forty-Ninth Magician* (1966), which he wrote and she illustrated. When he got too busy to collaborate with her, an editor encouraged her to write her own stories. Babbitt, who won a Christopher Award in 1976 for *Tuck Everlasting*, died in 2016 at age 84.

SCIENCE FICTION

A SWIFTLY TILTING PLANET

written by MADELEINE L'ENGLE

The third book in Madeleine L'Engle's *Time Quintet* series takes her tested approach to a thrilling young adult narrative and elevates it while diverting from her comfort zone. The child genius Charles Wallace is now well into his teen years, and his older sister, Meg, so often his protector and companion, is beginning a family of her own. But when an imminent threat of nuclear war arises, Charles Wallace is once again thrust into a winding journey through time to save the planet and everyone on it. L'Engle's previous books were all about searching for answers through exploring our physical universe: *A Wrinkle in Time* traversed the cosmos and *A Wind in the Door* explored our biology. But *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* finds its solutions in the past. Instead of catapulting readers to incredible, fantastical landscapes devised from L'Engle's imagination, this story is grounded in history—both personal and otherwise. While the novel, which won a National Book Award after its 1978 release, does take on, shall we say, alternative versions of American history, it still shines as a testament to the importance of our ancestry and a celebration



of those who came before us. Instead of whisking readers away to the wonders of different worlds, *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* shows them, with L'Engle's signature childlike exuberance, the adventures that exist in our own backyard.
—Peter Allen Clark

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR American writer Madeleine L'Engle was born in New York City in 1918. Her mother was a pianist and her father was a writer, so she was surrounded with artistic influences as a child. She started writing stories at age 5. She published her first novel, *The Small Rain*, in 1945, as an adult novel. Her early career focused more

on adult novels than young adult works until *A Wrinkle in Time* hit the shelves in 1962. It became an unrivaled success despite having been turned down by 26 publishers before Farrar, Straus & Giroux accepted it. Her books focused on family life, good and evil and the nature of God, which landed her on banned books lists across the country. "It seems people are willing to damn [*A Wrinkle in Time*] without reading it," She told the *New York Times* in 2001. "Nonsense about witchcraft and fantasy. First I felt horror, then anger, and finally I said, 'Ah, the hell with it.' It's great publicity, really." L'Engle died in 2007 at age 88.

MAGICAL REALISM

THE BLOODY CHAMBER

written by ANGELA CARTER

Whether we choose to blame Disney or the broader hegemonic influence of northern and western Europe on culture, there is a set of fairy tales that nearly every American knows by heart despite their issues. You know the ones—Little Red Riding Hood, Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel and so on. The problem is that nearly everything in the European fairy tale canon

is either obviously or ambiguously misogynistic.

Angela Carter addressed this issue in 1979 when she published *The Bloody Chamber*, a collection of short stories that reimagines many of these texts from a feminist perspective. Whereas the traditional forms tend to portray female characters as objects whose sexuality is passive and unspoken—a thing to be won by the prince, but always repressed—Carter's stories insist on an active and visceral feminine sexuality. It's less a subversion of childhood favorites than it is the proffering of "adult" eyeglasses. What Carter lays bare are the damaging tropes that were always there in these narratives—you just didn't see them until now.

—Elijah Wolfson

The Bloody Chamber and other stories Angela Carter



/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Angela Carter was born in Eastbourne, East Sussex, England, in 1940. Her father was a journalist, and she followed in his footsteps, working at a local newspaper. Her mother was overprotective, and

Carter rebelled—as a late teen, she smoked, she swore, and she married for the first time in 1960 at age 19. When her third novel, *Several Perceptions*, won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1969, she took the prize money and went to Japan, leaving her husband behind—she broke up with him via letter. Carter found independence during her two years in Japan. When she returned to London, she became interested in the new women's liberation movement, worked hand-to-mouth, had a series of sordid affairs, but eventually settled in with her second husband. These experiences shaped her writing through the course of her short life—her works are brutal, sexy, funny, smart, and undeniably original. Carter died of lung cancer in 1992. She was 51.

CHILDREN'S FANTASY

THE BFG

written by **ROALD DAHL**

Dedicated to Roald Dahl's late daughter Olivia, who died of measles encephalitis at the age of 7, *The BFG*, maybe more than any other Dahl book, offers children an escape from reality in which the young and kind triumph over darkness and hardship no matter the odds. After an orphan named Sophie is snatched from her bed in the dead of night by a mysterious 24-foot-tall behemoth who refers to himself as the BFG, or Big Friendly Giant, the pair form an unlikely friendship. But when Sophie learns that the large-eared, sensitive and

silly-speaking (think "hopscotch," "whizzpopping" and "crodsquinkled") BFG is the lone vegetarian among his child-eating brethren, she determines to put a stop to their murderous ways. This warmhearted tall tale, published a year before Dahl picked up the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement, artfully whisks readers away on a magical journey through London, Giant Country and beyond, to a realm of wild imagination. —**Megan McCluskey**



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Roald Dahl was born in Wales in 1916 to Norwegian parents. His father, a wealthy shipbroker, died when Dahl was three and left the family a fortune. He was schooled in England and opted for adventure

instead of university upon graduation. At the start of WWII, he enlisted and served as a fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force and as a spy for the British government. His first novel, *The Gremlins*, drew from his experience in the RAF. After the war, he went on to write some of the best-loved children's books of all time, filled with macabre characters and twisted plots that delighted young readers. Dahl also wrote award-winning sinister tales for adults. Despite publicly admitting he was anti-Semitic in an interview shortly before his death in 1990—and the existence of a number of reports of his alleged misogyny and racism—for a long time, it seemed that the immense popularity of his books and their accompanying adaptations overshadowed concerns regarding his reputed prejudices. In 2023, Puffin Books, a children's imprint of Penguin Books, came under fire for working with the Roald Dahl Story Company, which was acquired by Netflix in 2021, to rewrite editions of Dahl's children's books to remove language related to race, gender, weight and mental health that today's readers might deem offensive. In a statement, the Roald Dahl Story Company said the decision was made to ensure that "Dahl's wonderful stories and characters continue to be enjoyed by all children today." However, some within the publishing industry have said updating Dahl's works is censorship.





SWORD & SORCERY

ALANNA: THE FIRST ADVENTURE

written by **TAMORA PIERCE**

Without Tamora Pierce's Alanna of Trebond paving the way, we might never have gotten to read about such beloved young heroines as George R.R. Martin's Arya Stark or Sarah J. Maas's Celaena Sardothien. We first meet Alanna in *The Song of the Lioness* series as she's preparing to disguise herself as a boy in order to take her twin brother's place as a knight in training. So begins a four-book saga replete with magic, love and unforgettable adventure that spans decades in the medieval fantasy world of Tortall. In many ways ahead of its time, Pierce's fantastical young-adult story doesn't shy away from addressing issues of feminism, diversity, gender and sexuality, and class politics. —**Megan McCluskey**

/ **OTHER WORKS** *Alanna: The First Adventure* is the first of Pierce's *The Song of the Lioness* series, followed by *In the Hand of the Goddess* (1984), *The Woman Who Rides Like a Man* (1986) and *Lioness Rampant* (1988).

CHILDREN'S FANTASY

HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE

written by **DIANA WYNNE JONES**



Mysterious curses, duelling magicians, an empowered young female lead: *Howl's Moving Castle* by Diana Wynne Jones, first published in the

U.S. in 1986, has all the elements of a classic young adult fantasy novel. Yet the British author, who has been credited with inspiring more recent entries into the fantasy canon like Neil Gaiman's 1991 comic book mini-series, *The Books of Magic*, imbued her humorous story of a young witch's journey of self-discovery with wildly original details and deeply flawed characters that elevate it beyond a simple coming-of-age tale. Rather than fight the curse that gives her the appearance (and the aches and pains) of an old woman, 18-year-old Sophie chooses to protect her sisters from the predations of a notorious lady-killing wizard by becoming his housekeeper. But not all is as it seems in the wizard Howl's castle. Doors open into parallel worlds, the hearth fire has an attitude and Howl spends several hours a day primping in the bathroom, letting his apprentice do all the work. Meanwhile, the castle maintains a peripatetic existence, running from curses as much as from Howl's cast-off lovers. Adapted into an Academy-Award nominated animated feature by Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki in 2004, *Howl's Moving Castle* enjoyed a resurgence in popularity, earning the 2006 Phoenix Award from the Children's Literature Association, which recognizes overlooked gems from the past. —**Aryn Baker**

CHILDREN'S FANTASY

REDWALL

written by **BRIAN JACQUES**



When the peaceful woodland creatures who make their home in a red sandstone abbey at the edge of Mossflower

Woods find themselves besieged by a rat army, the brave mouse Matthias seeks out the sword that can save the day. And, with that, Brian Jacques begins to establish a world that would sustain the eponymous series through more than two dozen prequels, sequels and other tie-ins. Not only do these critters go on page-turning adventures, solve riddles alongside young readers and prepare feasts sumptuous enough to inspire a cookbook, they also possess rich inner lives. The moral framework of *Redwall*, a Carnegie Medal nominee, can sometimes be stark—the idea that some kinds of animals are generally good and others are bad is a central device—but its fantasy universe has a depth that rivals any mole's best effort. —*Lily Rothman*

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Brian Jacques was born in Liverpool in 1939, the son of a truck driver who loved to read adventure stories to his sons. Jacques left school at age 16 and became a merchant sailor. When he returned, he worked blue-collar jobs, including as a milk truck driver, which would turn out to be the catalyst for his *Redwall* series. One of his stops was a school for the blind, and Jacques volunteered to read to the kids. He soon grew tired of the “adolescent angst” stories available and set off to write his own.



FANTASY OF MANNERS

SWORDSPPOINT

written by **ELLEN KUSHNER**

Though there are many duels fought with swords in the world of Riverside, the clashes simply spoken out loud are what define Ellen Kushner's cult-favorite novel. *Swordspoint*, a defining work in the fantasy of manners sub-genre, is centered around characters, their witty banter and the quieter dilemmas they face surrounding politics and class. The novel follows the journey of Richard St. Vier, a swordsman who makes his living by killing nobles in a world unlike our own. We're aware that the land he traverses is fantastical, but those elements are played down in favor of a small-scale story centered on Richard's tormented love for a scholar named Alec. There's no kingdom to save or world to protect, but instead a romance to root for written in thrilling and precise terms. —*Annabel Gutterman*

THE LIVES OF CHRISTOPHER CHANT

written by **DIANA WYNNE JONES**

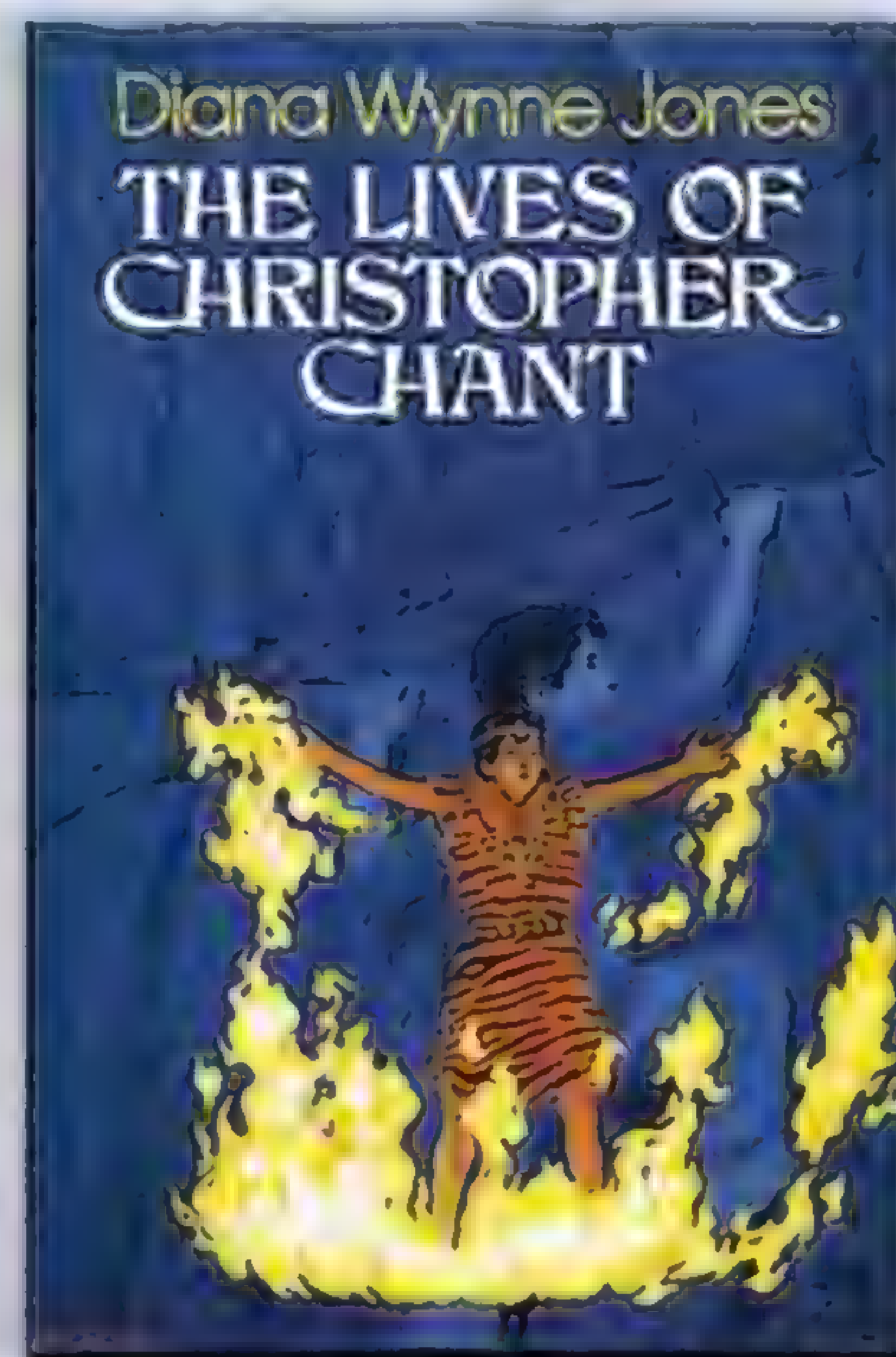
Christopher Chant is a rich but neglected English child, looked after by a rotating cast of nannies and governesses, when he discovers that his dreams are a little different than those of his peers. In them, he explores whole new universes, where mermaids swim and magical cats roam. This is the first sign that Christopher is destined to become the Chrestomanci, a fantastical job created by famed fantasy author Diana Wynne Jones. The Chrestomanci holds a unique position: blessed with nine lives and powerful magic, he is tasked with the responsibility of overseeing parallel worlds. But young Christopher doesn't know that yet. He becomes a pawn in the illicit smuggling plots of his nefarious uncle, befriends a mysterious child goddess and—eventually—discovers his own formidable powers as an enchanter when he takes his rightful place as the heir to the Chrestomanci title. Published starting in the 1970s as one of Wynne Jones's seven installments in this series, some of the alternate worlds Christopher ventures to can feel racially insensitive. Christopher's journey to self-discovery and magical awareness, as well as the author's creative use of parallel universe theory and a mix of magical powers, make *The Lives of Christopher Chant* a classic. —*Raisa Bruner*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR British writer Diana Wynne Jones emerged from a difficult childhood to become a prolific fiction writer and the recipient of numerous awards. Born in 1934 in London, she was the eldest of three girls whose

parents were inattentive at best. Shortly after graduating from St. Anne's College in 1956, she married a professor and had three sons. To deal with daily stress, she started writing. She had some

success in the '70s and '80s, but gained popularity again in the late '90s when J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, who many have said mimics Wynne Jones' plots, came out and made fantasy fiction a dominant genre. Wynne Jones also published *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* in 1996, a humorous nonfiction work which reads like a travel guide and catalogs the people, places, objects, plots and characters that typically appear in fantasy novels. It became a cult classic. Wynne Jones died in 2011 at age 76.



HIGH FANTASY

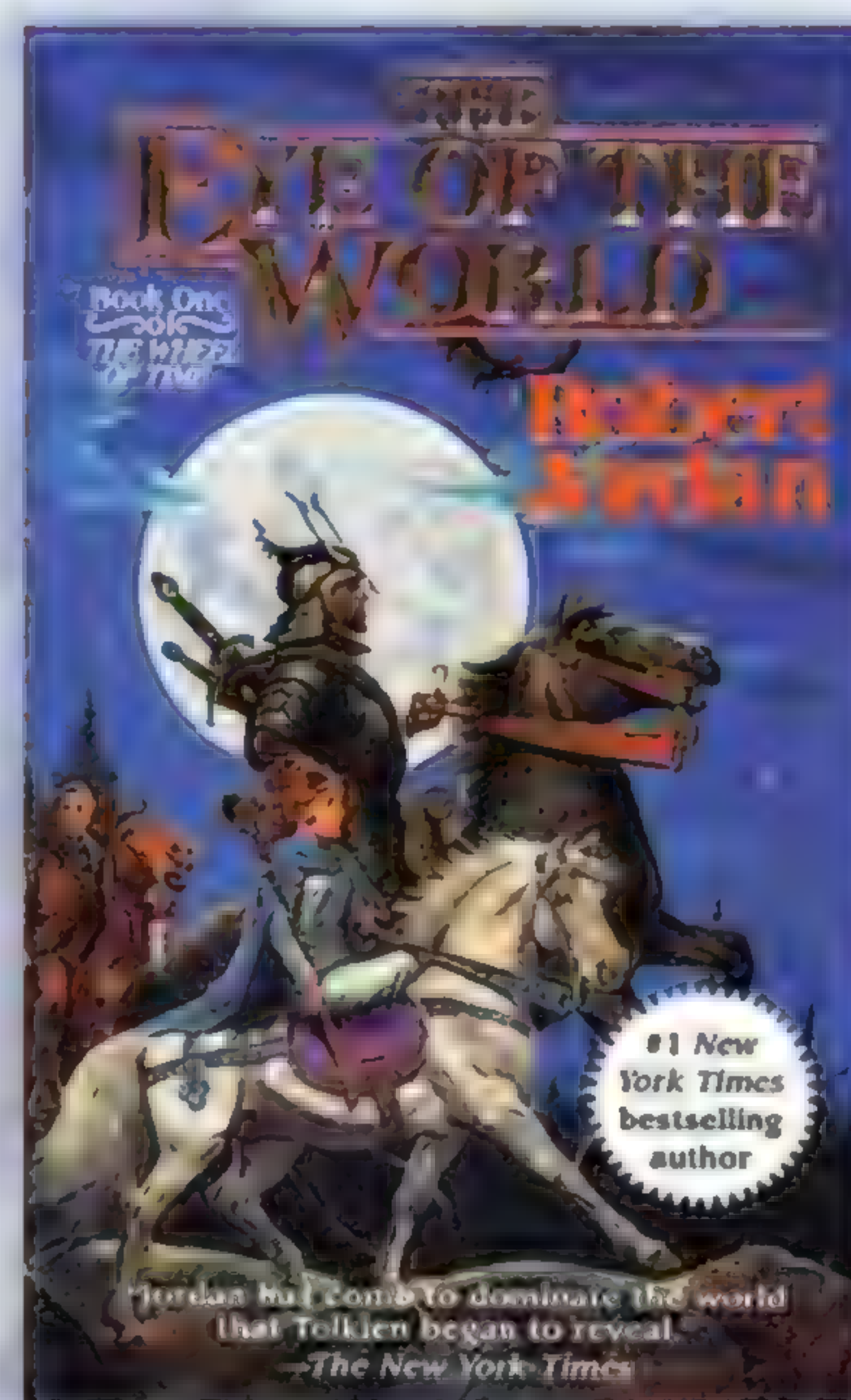
THE EYE OF THE WORLD

written by **ROBERT JORDAN**

Within a genre that's known for its expansive world-building and creative approaches to culture, religion and society, few series match the ambition of Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time*, beginning with *The Eye of the World*. The book takes the reader to an enormous world full of magic, monsters, wars, politics, history and danger. While the setup is banal (unassuming farmboy is the chosen one of prophecy), Jordan's epic tale succeeds on how it subverts expectations: the hero is prophesied to kill everyone around him; magic is an exceptionally political pursuit; and the deep history of every culture described in the book is put to good use. The series is best appreciated for its breathtaking attempt to create a complicated world built upon a long, rich history. Readers have called out *The Wheel of Time* over a number of issues: its female characters are poorly written, Jordan's fictional cultures often contain appropriative elements and the story drags for certain stretches. With those caveats, over the span of 14 books and more than 10,000 pages, *The Wheel of Time* stands out as a high point of the fantasy genre, and it all begins with *The Eye of the World*. —*Peter Allen Clark*

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Robert Jordan, born James Oliver Rigney Jr. in Charleston, South Carolina, was a U.S. Army veteran who did two tours during the Vietnam war, a graduate of The Citadel, and a nuclear engineer in the U.S. Navy. He was injured while working on base and took up writing during his recovery. He met his future wife, editor Harriet McDougal, at a Charleston-area bookstore when he was trying to get his first book published. She would become his editor throughout his life. His first novel was *The Fallon Blood* (1980), published under the pen name Reagan O'Neal (he used a number of pen names

throughout his career). It was an historical romance which was intended to be the first of a series that explored the Southern arc of history, but he tired of it after two more novels. He then wrote seven novels in the *Conan the Barbarian* series before publishing the first installment of the *Wheel of Time* series in 1990. Jordan was diagnosed with a rare blood disease in 2006, just as the 11th of the 14 *Wheel* books was published. He died in 2007, and fellow fantasy writer Brandon Sanderson finished the series under the direction of Jordan's wife.



HORROR

GOOD OMENS

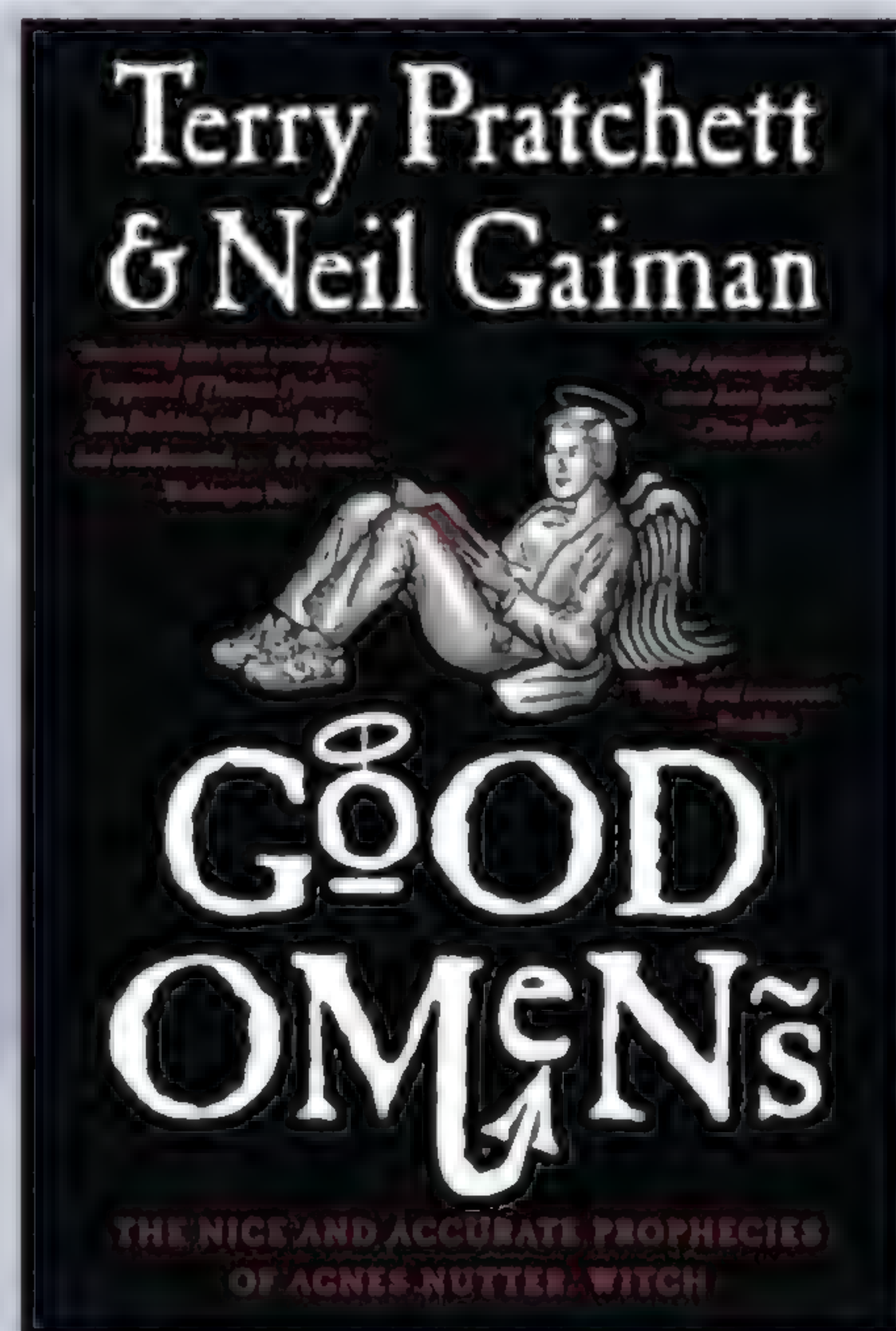
written by **TERRY PRATCHETT
& NEIL GAIMAN**

For the most part, the fantasy genre has been defined by solo creators itching to plant their personal flags in the literary landscape—a divergence from that is what makes *Good Omens* so special. This novel, which tells the story of a bungled Biblical apocalypse and the hijinks that follow, was co-written by two titans of British genre fiction: Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett. *Good Omens* follows an angel and a demon, both of whom have spent a long time on earth and have grown accustomed to what the material world can offer. When Hell sets the Antichrist baby upon the world, marking the beginning of the end of days, the angel and demon strike up an unlikely bargain to keep Revelations from revealing itself. Little do they know that an accidental switcheroo left the infant Antichrist in the care of strangers. *Good Omens* as a story is a solid idea on its own, but it is thoroughly elevated through the collaboration of these two authors. When it was published in 1990, Pratchett had already established himself as the king of comedic fantasy, and Gaiman

had begun his ascension into the nerdpantheon following the 1989 launch of his *Sandman* comic series. *Good Omens* brings out the best of the two authors, while dulling some of their less-desirable individual quirks. The collaboration kept Gaiman from getting too far up his own scholarship, and focused Pratchett's usual firehose of jokes. What sprang from this once-in-a-genre alliance is an extremely good, and wildly entertaining, fantasy. —*Peter Allen Clark*

/ ADAPTATIONS In addition to a radio adaptation in 2014, stage

adaptations, and a proposed graphic novel, Amazon released *Good Omens* as a 6-part limited TV series in 2019, with Gaiman as showrunner (Pratchett died in 2015). It was renewed in 2021, and the second series was released in 2023. A third series was planned, but it was paused in September 2024 after five women accused Gaiman of sexual assault in a podcast series, including his former nanny, who filed a lawsuit. Gaiman denies the allegations. In October, Amazon announced that season three would consist of a single 90-minute episode without Gaiman's involvement.



CHILDREN'S FANTASY

HAROUN AND THE SEA OF STORIES

written by **SALMAN RUSHDIE**

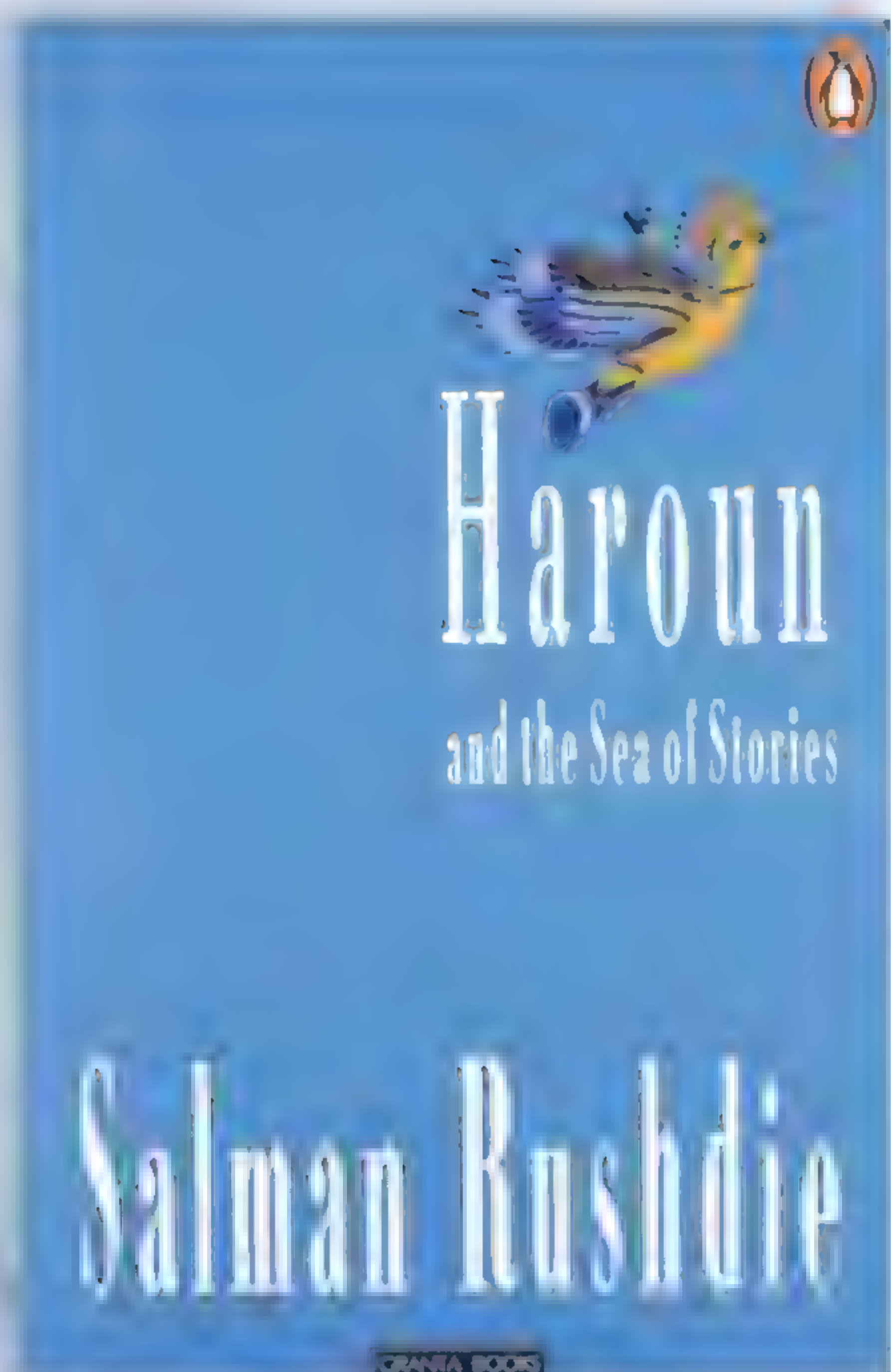
In 1989, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, then Iran's supreme leader, issued a fatwa against Salman Rushdie in response to *The Satanic Verses*, which he deemed blasphemous. The next year, while under police protection and separated from his young son, the controversial author did something unexpected: He published a novel for children. A hybrid of Eastern and Western influences that draws on classic fantasy tales as diverse as *The Wizard of Oz* and *One Thousand*

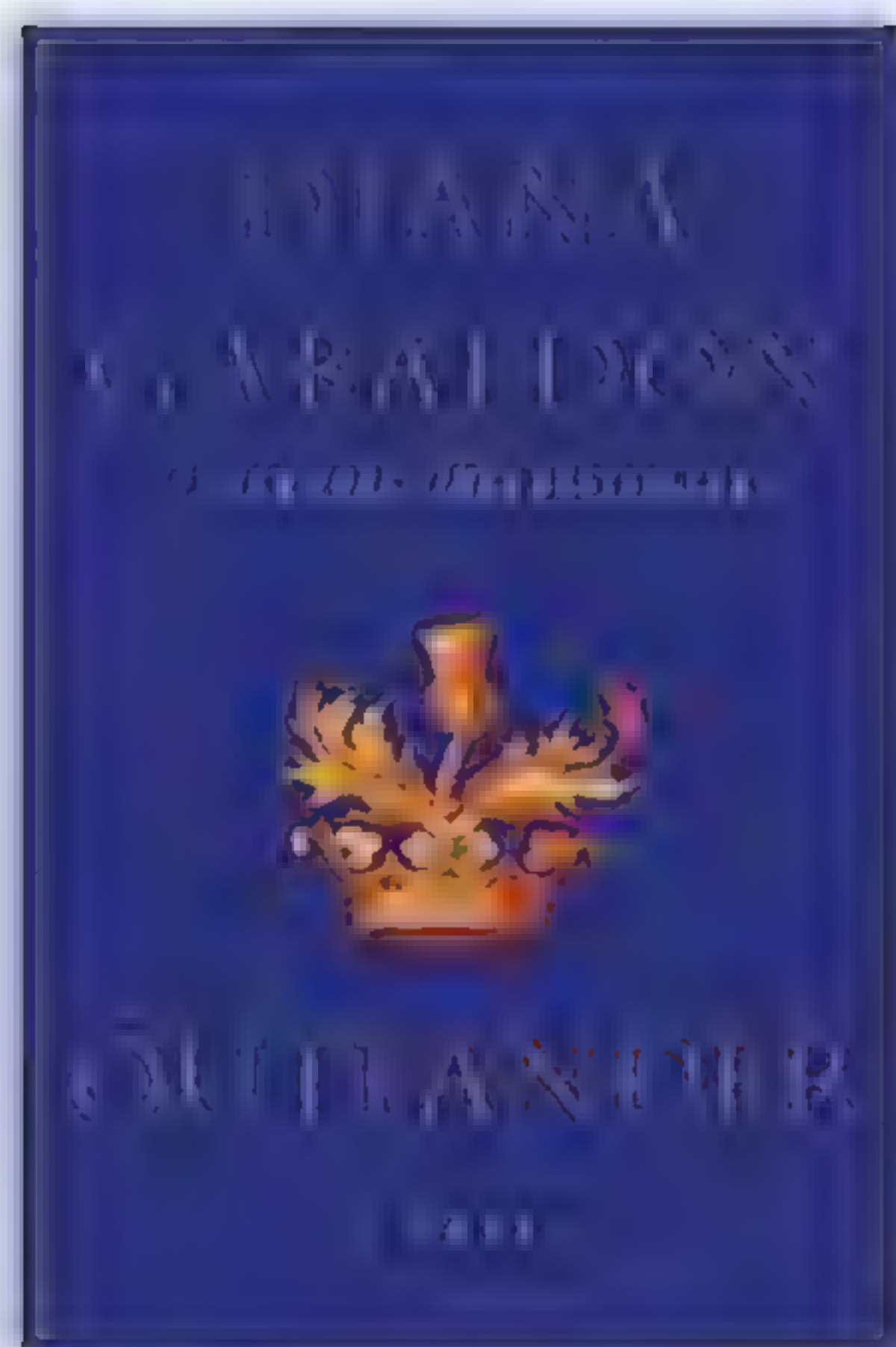
and *One Nights*, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* follows the titular 12-year-old boy—who resides in an ancient Eastern city “so ruinously sad that it had forgotten its name”—on a quest to restore his storyteller father's lost gift for narrative. That the novel would be, in large part, an allegory for the relationship between art, tyranny and censorship was probably inevitable. But beyond its timely context, Rushdie's beautiful descriptions, playful use of language, colorful characters and irrepressible sense of humor make for the kind of timeless, ageless adventure story that appears only a few times in a generation. —*Judy Berman*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Born in Mumbai into an Indian Kashmiri Muslim family, Salman Rushdie moved to England for high school and later permanently settled there. His 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses* was inspired by the

life of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. In 1989, after Ayatollah Khomeini called for Rushdie's assassination, the British government put Rushdie under police protection. Rushdie has long had an outsize footprint in the literary world. His second novel, *Midnight's Children*, won the Booker Prize in 1981, and in 2007, he was knighted for his contributions to literature. He also served as the president of PEN America Center, which defends and celebrates the freedom of expression, from 2004 to 2006, and he founded the PEN World Voices Festival. In 2022, Rushdie, then 75, was stabbed 10 times as he was about to give a public lecture at the Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua, New York. Rushdie, who lost sight in one eye and the use of one hand in the attack, wrote a memoir about it, *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder*, which was published in 2024. The attacker, Hadi Matar, was convicted of second-degree murder and assault in February 2025 and faces up to 25 years in prison.





ROMANTIC FANTASY

OUTLANDER

written by **DIANA GABALDON**

Diana Gabaldon's debut novel is a romance epic, a time-hopping fantasy and a war story. The first in a planned 10-book series—with seven seasons and counting of a hit TV show to match—*Outlander* traces the journey of WWII British combat nurse Claire Randall, who accidentally transports herself into the 18th-century Scottish Highlands one morning. Forced to marry a young, virile Scotsman for protection from a sadistic military leader, Claire discovers the joys of romantic passion and 1740s-era adventure. But this is also a book about pain, torture and pure evil. While the world Claire inhabits is real enough, her skill as a healer and the beliefs of the time—defined by folklore and creatures like fairies and witches—turns it into a more mythical version of the past, where villains seem invincible and time travel is a given. —**Raisa Bruner**



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Diana Gabaldon was born in Williams, Arizona, in 1952 and grew up in Flagstaff. Her father was an Arizona state senator. She has a B.S. in zoology, a M.S. in marine biology, and a Ph.D. in behavioral ecology. She was a professor at Arizona State University for 12 years until she decided to write a novel just to give it a try. She titled the book *Cross*

Stitch, a play on “a stitch in time.” Her American publisher thought it sounded too much like embroidery and wanted a more adventurous title: *Outlander*. (It was published as *Cross Stitch* in the U.K.) The *Outlander* book series, which was originally planned as a trilogy, has now grown to nine volumes, with the 10th (and final) rumored to be in the works. Gabaldon has also written the *Lord John* series about one of *Outlander*'s secondary, but very compelling characters, Lord John Grey.

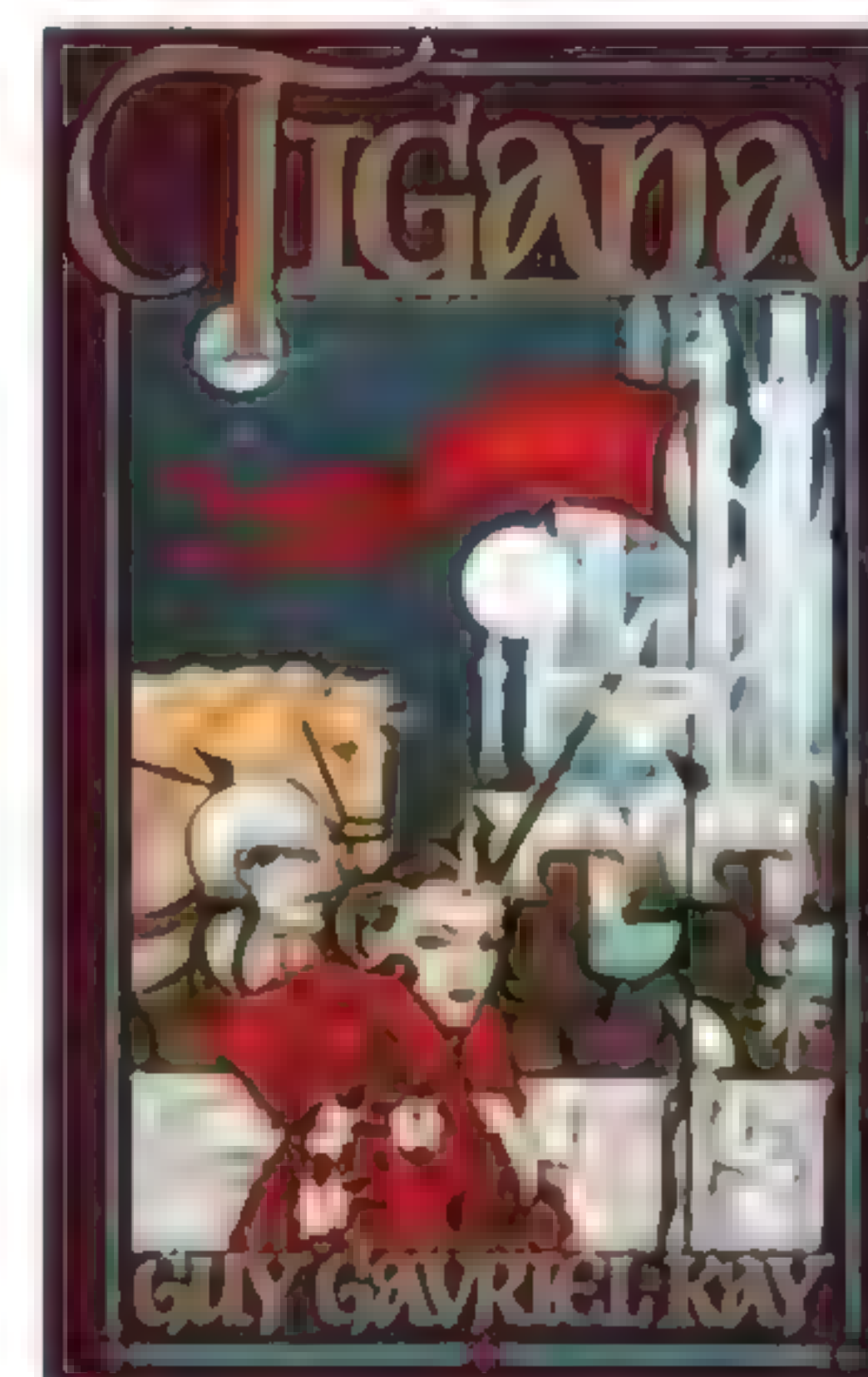
HIGH FANTASY

TIGANA

written by **GUY GAVRIEL KAY**

Twenty years after tyrant sorcerers Brandin of Ygrath and Alberico of Barbadior conquered the nine provinces of the Peninsula of the Palm—a Renaissance Italy-inspired region of a world with two moons—the once-beautiful and prosperous province of Tigana has all but been forgotten. Wiped from the world's memory by a spell cast by Brandin in retribution for his beloved son's death, Tigana is remembered only by the few survivors of that long-ago battle. In this high-fantasy epic, J.R.R. Tolkien disciple Guy Gavriel Kay masterfully weaves an exploration of identity and morality—both heroes and villains reside in the gray area—into the story of a rebel faction's plot to restore their homeland to its former glory.

—**Megan McCluskey**

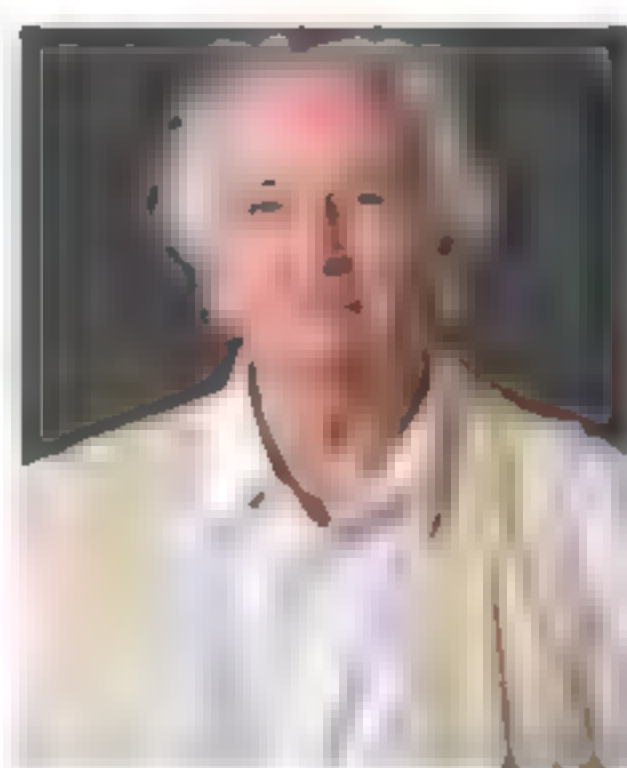
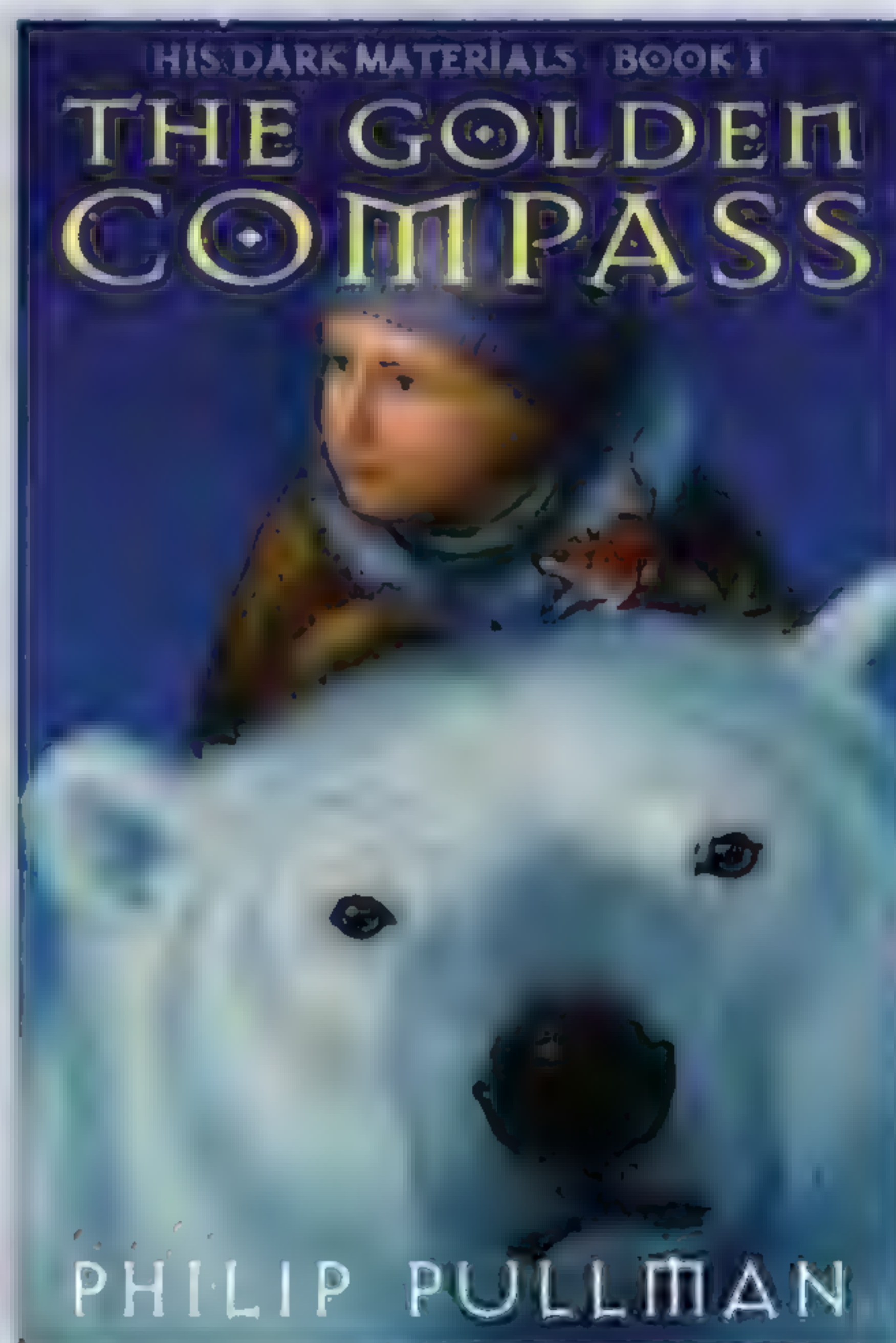


CHILDREN'S FANTASY

THE GOLDEN COMPASS

written by **PHILIP PULLMAN**

Lyra Belacqua is a clever, rambunctious orphan growing up in a world a few shades more magical than our own when she is thrust into a mysterious adventure. After the kidnapping of her friend, Lyra unwittingly finds herself at the center of a power struggle involving a nefarious church, fearless scientists and a talking, armored polar bear. Philip Pullman's fantasy classic—the first in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy—kicks off an epic that wrestles with the fate of the universe, the definition of consciousness and the loss of innocence. Its unique forms of magic—"daemon" animals, or souls, that live outside the body; an "alethiometer" that divines the truth; immortal witches who swoop through the skies—only heighten the surreal beauty of the story. Pullman's book was turned into a 2007 movie starring Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig, and an HBO series starring Lin-Manuel Miranda in 2019. But the books themselves best reflect Pullman's compassionate curiosity, in which questions are encouraged, corrupt institutions are held accountable and differences are respected and embraced. —**Raisa Bruner**



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phillip Pullman was born in Norwich, England, in 1946. He was a middle-school teacher and wrote school plays before publishing his first book in 1972. The themes in *His Dark Materials* saw the books condemned by church groups in the U.S., especially after the 2007 release of *The Golden Compass* film brought them wider attention. In the following two years, the trilogy was among the country's most frequently challenged books, according to the American Library

Association, as anxious parents attempted to have it removed from public and school libraries. "Atheism for kids," the Catholic League announced in 2007, "that is what Philip Pullman sells." The fury has worn away over the years, and Pullman, who has won numerous awards and was knighted in 2019 for his services to literature, sounded rather disappointed in 2017 when he told *TIME* "clearly, no evident evil has sprouted from its presence in the world for 20 years. There's nothing they can point to and say, 'This man ought to be burned at the stake.'"

URBAN FANTASY

NEVERWHERE

written by NEIL GAIMAN

In a twist on the customary order of business, Neil Gaiman adapted his first solo novel from his screenplay for a TV miniseries, rather than the other way round. But the quality of *Neverwhere* doesn't suffer for its origins. The darkly comical story follows Richard Mayhew, a young London businessman who is ripped from his perfectly average life after he stops

to help an injured girl on the sidewalk. Upon realizing that he's become unrecognizable to everyone he knows in the wake of the girl's departure, Richard finds his way to London Below, a mysterious netherworld composed of a mass of railway stations and populated by monsters, assassins and angels alike. There, in the menacing and magical city that exists underneath his own, Richard must track down the girl and help her solve the mystery of her family's murder in order to find a way home—a quest that ultimately leads him to self-discovery. Often seen as an allegory for urban homelessness, *Neverwhere* shines a light on the plight of those who “fall through the cracks” of society.

—Megan McCluskey



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Neil Gaiman is a British-born writer who now lives in the U.S., in a town outside of Minneapolis. He started out as a journalist and wrote his first book, about the band Duran Duran, in 1984, but he's best known for his

fantasy work. Gaiman's epic dark fantasy comic book *The Sandman*—which takes place in the world of dreams—was among a handful of titles (along with Alan Moore's *Watchmen* and Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*) that elevated comic books into the realm of real literature. Gaiman, one of the world's most prolific storytellers, also writes novels, children's books, poetry and more. He has topped bestseller lists; won Hugo, Nebula and Eisner awards, and has seen his work adapted for stage, radio, film and television. “[Fantasy] sends us back to our lives with a different point of view,” he told *TIME* in 2022.

CHILDREN'S FANTASY

THE SUBTLE KNIFE

written by **PHILIP PULLMAN**

The second installment in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series, *The Subtle Knife* finds readers dropped into a world much like our own, alongside scrappy youngster Will Parry. But soon, Will finds his way into dangerous parallel universes and joins forces with Lyra from *The Golden Compass*; together, they track down Will's missing father and run from enemies both human and supernatural with the aid of the titular subject, a singular knife that opens pathways between different worlds. Both Lyra and Will are children who had to grow up too fast, but it's their tenacity and hunger for knowledge—whether about their own identities or the truth of consciousness itself—that unites them. Along the way, they enlist the help of witches, scientists and a Texan aeronaut, as Pullman nimbly melds our understanding of both the real and the fantastical in his pivotal middle installment of the trilogy. —**Raisa Bruner**



FAIRY TALE

ELLA ENCHANTED

written by **GAIL CARSON LEVINE**

Inspired by the story of Cinderella, this original retelling of a classic fairy tale features a feisty and unforgettable heroine in place of her damsel-in-distress namesake. Levine's Newbery Honor book follows 15-year-old Ella of Frell as she struggles against a spell, placed on her at birth, that forces her to obey any command she's given, no matter how cruel or dangerous. But it's the daring ways in which Ella fights back against this "gift" of obedience—from playing tricks on her evil stepsisters to taming a pack of ogres eager to turn her into a meal—that make her a leading lady whose happily-ever-after you can't help but root for. Carson Levine repackaged a foundational fantasy into a celebrated novel for young readers that features a girl who takes control of her own destiny in the face of great adversity. —**Megan McCluskey**

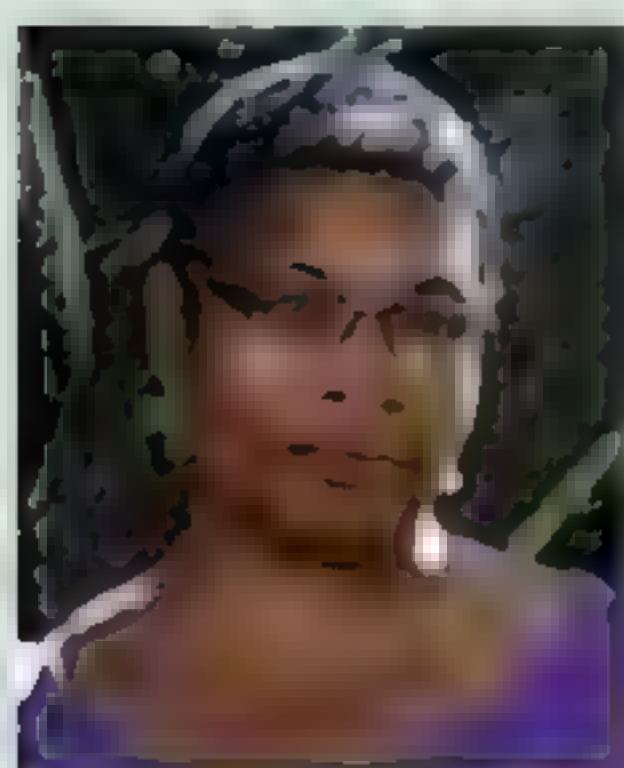
/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Gail Carson Levine was born in New York City in 1947. She worked for 27 years for the state of New York, helping people find jobs. In 1987, she started writing, but it took almost a decade for a publisher to accept one of her manuscripts. *Ella Enchanted* was her first novel. Since then, she has written dozens of fairy-tale twists.

SCIENCE FICTION

BROWN GIRL IN THE RING

written by **NALO HOPKINSON**

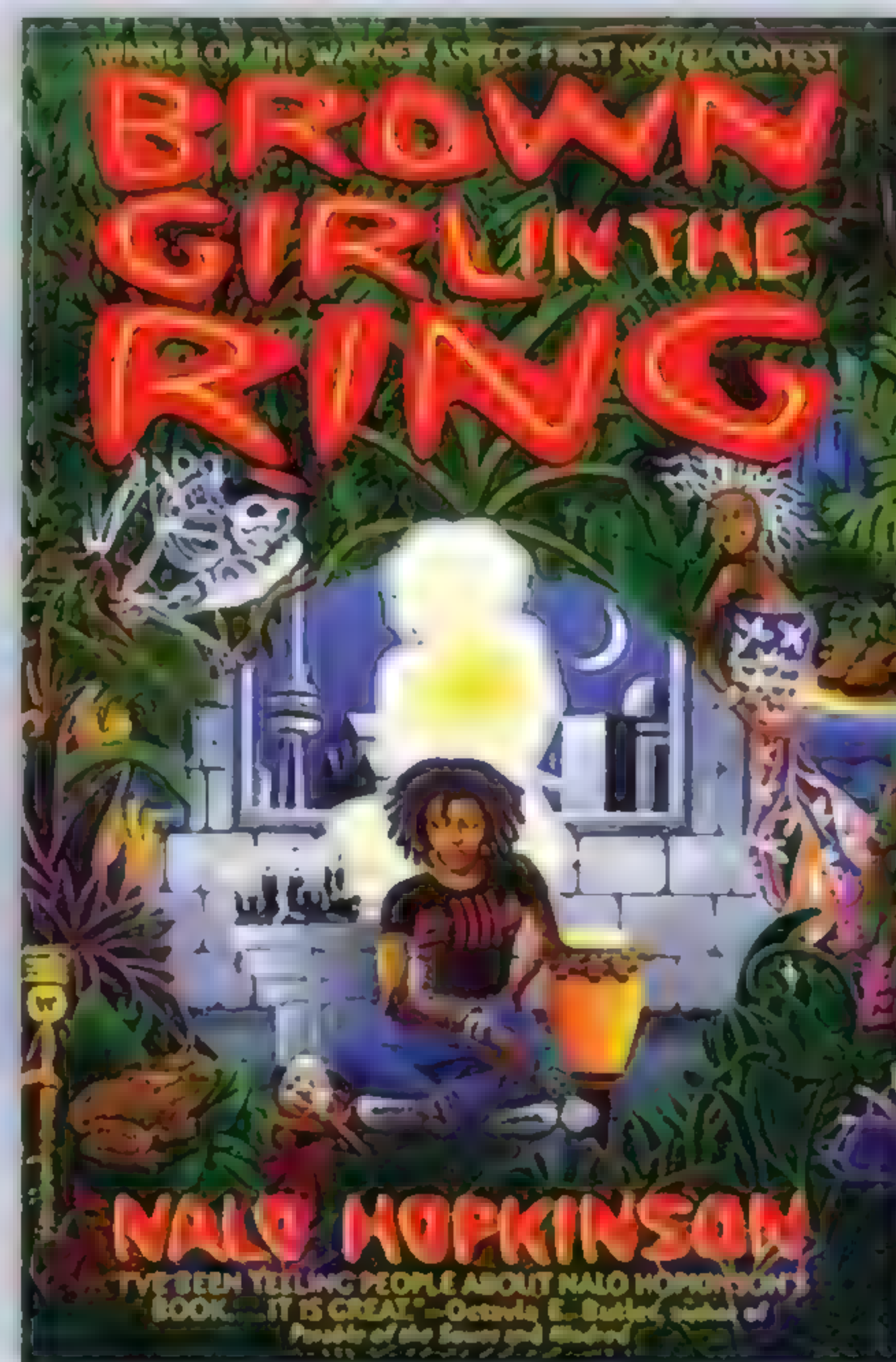
"Dystopia is everywhere," the Jamaican-Canadian author Nalo Hopkins once said. "Particularly for peoples who are surviving the effects of colonialism and globalization, the apocalypse done happened already." That might explain why the dystopian future depicted in Hopkins's award-winning first novel looks so much like many poor people's lives in the present. Set in a blighted Toronto where basic healthcare, working vehicles and even running water are unaffordable luxuries, enjoyed only by wealthy people who have relocated to the suburbs, it follows Ti-Jeanne, a young woman of West Indian origin who possesses the unsettling ability to foresee strangers' deaths. Torn between the drug-addicted father of her newborn child and the brusque grandmother who raised her, Ti-Jeanne is forced to take on the city's sadistic mob-boss overlord in a battle to end her family's suffering. A hybrid of sci-fi, fantasy, eye-popping horror and Afro-Caribbean lore, the eloquent *Brown Girl in the Ring* is a true original—and the savior at its center is a beacon of strength in the body of a young single mother. —*Judy Berman*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Nalo Hopkins was born in 1960 in Kingston, Jamaica, into a literary family. Her Guyanese father was a English and Latin teacher who also wrote plays and poetry. "One of the things it did was let me know I

could be a writer. I could be an artist," she told the *Los Angeles Times*. Hopkins has lived in the Caribbean, Canada and the United States. When she was 16, her

family moved from Guyana to Toronto, which she says was quite the culture shock, but her exposure to both Caribbean fairy tales and Western works shapes her unique plots, themes and characters. *Brown Girl in the Ring*, Hopkins's first novel, won the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer (now called Astounding Award for Best New Writer) and the Locus Award for Best First Novel. She was named the Damon Knight Grand Master by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America in 2020.



HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

written by J.K. ROWLING

Widely revered as potentially the most sacred entry in the *Harry Potter* series is *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, the third of seven books. In the novel, Harry ends another insufferable summer at the Dursleys and hears about an escaped murderer, Sirius Black, in the Muggle news. The wizarding world is also buzzing about the infamous Sirius, who had been held at Azkaban, a maximum-security prison for those who have committed severe crimes. Mr. Weasley warns Harry that Sirius is after him. At Hogwarts, Dumbledore informs students that the school will be guarded by the dreaded Dementors, Azkaban guards who can suck the souls out of wizards. Harry, Hermione, and Ron enroll in Professor Trelawny's Divination class and Hagrid's Care of Magical Creatures class. Harry loses the first Quidditch match of the season when Dementors storm the field in search of Sirius. When he learns that Sirius betrayed his parents and are to blame for their death, Harry vows to kill him. But Harry soon discovers that Peter Pettigrew—once a good friend to Harry's parents and Sirius—was in fact responsible for betraying the Potters' whereabouts to Voldemort. Sirius, it turns out, is Harry's godfather. The Dementors find Sirius and are about to suck his soul when Hermione magically turns back time. Harry then conjures a powerful Patronus charm to save Sirius. Still a wanted wizard, Sirius goes into hiding, and Harry sadly returns to the Dursleys. In this installment, Harry and friends begin to turn their gaze outside the walls of Hogwarts toward the larger battle against injustice brewing in their world. —*Lev Grossman and Megan McCluskey*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Joanne Rowling was born in 1965 in Yate, Gloucestershire, into a middle-class home. She was an average student. Her mother, with whom she was very close, died shortly after she graduated from

college, which, in part, led her to move to Portugal to teach English. There, she met and married a TV journalist and they had a daughter together. Her

husband was abusive and kicked her out after 13 months of marriage. By this time, Rowling had already written the draft for *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. She and her daughter moved to Scotland and went on public assistance. A friend loaned her enough money to get her teaching certificate in 1996, and she began teaching in Edinburgh. During this time, 12 publishers had rejected *Philosopher's Stone* before Bloomsbury Publishing took a chance on it in 1997. Scholastic bought the U.S. rights to it and published it as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in 1998. It became a *New York Times* bestseller.



FAIRY TALE

SPINDLE'S END

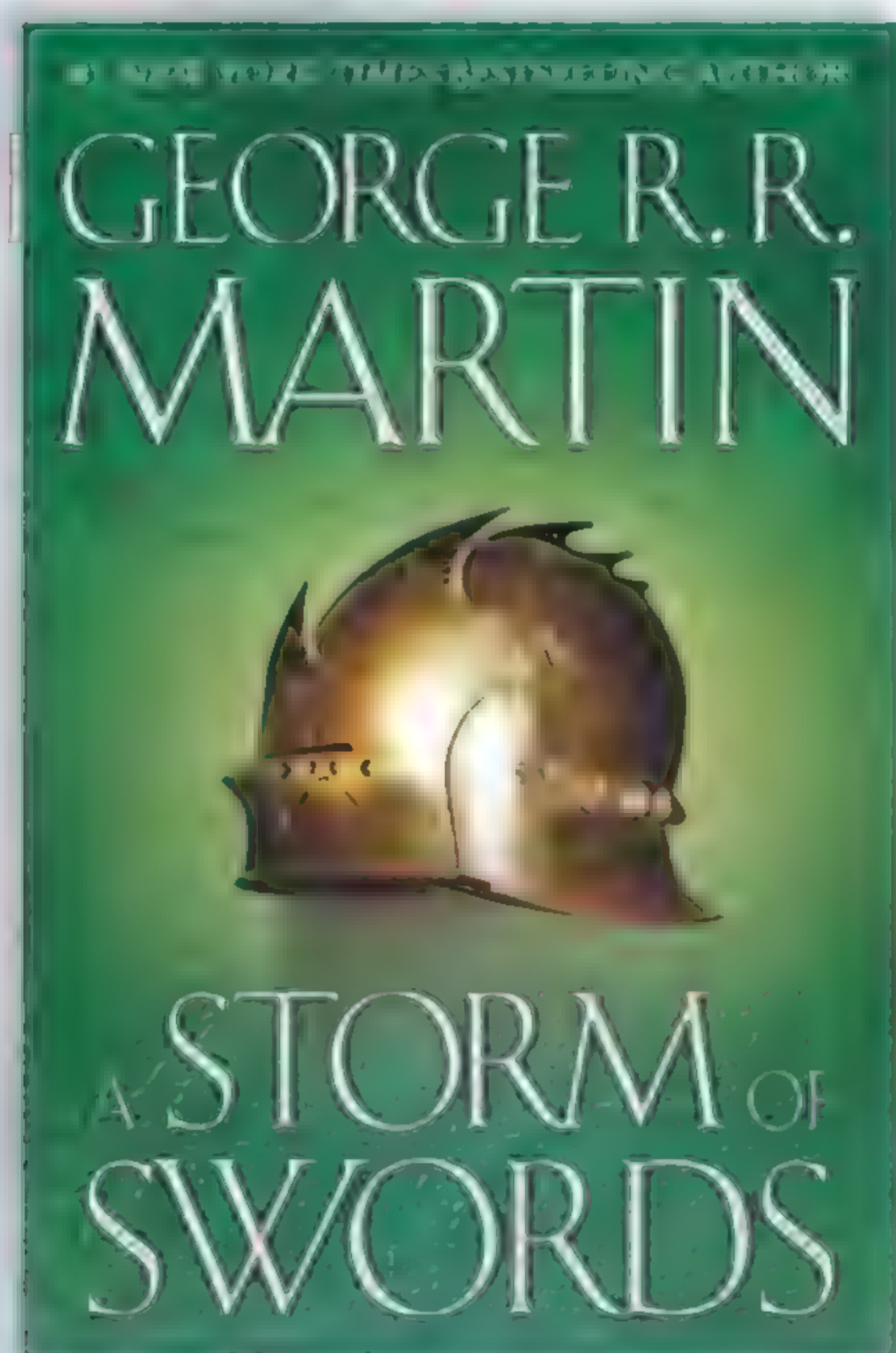
written by **ROBIN MCKINLEY**

Robin McKinley's fantasy worlds are so rich you can feel the magic in the air. That's the premise at the beginning of *Spindle's End*, her creative retelling of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale, too: It's set in a pastoral universe buzzing with fantastical elements, from talking animals to water with a mind of its own. McKinley's story is familiar and her setting recalls the archetypical rural idyll of a Disney fairy tale, but the twists are unexpected and the characters well-defined and quirky. Rosie, her princess, is cursed at birth—but a friendly fairy smuggles her away to a small village to grow up in relative safety, oblivious to her royal identity and happy to get her hands dirty as an animal healer. As Rosie's fateful 21st birthday approaches, the magic of the curse reaches a boiling point. In McKinley's smart final act, however, it's the power of selfless friendship and true generosity that saves the day, not a generic handsome stranger. She teaches us that princesses—so often relegated to passive roles—have power of their own. —**Raisa Bruner**

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Newberry Medal-winning author Robin McKinley was born in 1962 in Warren, Ohio. Her father was an officer in the U.S. Navy, so she grew up all over the world, including in California, New York, Japan, and Maine. She graduated from



Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, in 1975 and worked as a researcher and at a bookstore while writing her first novel, *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* (1978), which was picked up by the first publisher who read it and immediately thrust McKinley into prominence. McKinley's works are primarily either retellings of classic fairy tales or high fantasy with strong female characters. She told *School Library Journal* that discovering *The Lord of the Rings* series as a middle-schooler changed her life, but it also made her want to write about more robust female protagonists, "It is far from perfect—it is, for example, one of the places where my burning need for capable, interesting, active women characters in the books I read came from—but when I was 11, it gave me wings." In 2022, she received the Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master honor from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association.



HIGH FANTASY

A STORM OF SWORDS

written by **GEORGE R.R. MARTIN**

At nearly 1,000 pages, George R.R. Martin's *A Storm of Swords*—the third installment in his *A Song of Ice and Fire* series—is one of his most eventful and most lauded. Martin's unpredictable medieval world is rendered with unflinching brutality: the so-called Red Wedding and the Purple Wedding, both turning points for his series, unfold here. And the characters, which he spent thousands of pages painstakingly developing in the first two novels, take flight: Jon Snow finds forbidden love, Danaerys Targaryen unleashes her powers of fire, and Robb and Catelyn Stark scheme and sacrifice. The breadth of Martin's vision comes

fully into focus in *A Storm of Swords*, as does his continued willingness to upset expectations. If the first book in the series set the precedent for killing off beloved characters, then *A Storm of Swords* is where Martin makes it clear no one is safe. These are the scenes that became show-stopping centerpieces in HBO's *Game of Thrones* series, and continue to indicate the high-water mark for shocking plot twists. Martin, a frequent subject of controversy, may not be pushing the field toward equity or more inclusive storytelling. But his groundbreaking series remains an important source of inspiration for writers like Marlon James. —*Raisa Bruner*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In 2011, shortly before *Game of Thrones* premiered, George R.R. Martin, also known as G.R.R.M. to fantasy fans, told TIME that he has always had an affection for decay because of his mother's riches to rags family history. Her family, the Bradys, had a prosperous construction business but lost everything in the Great Depression. By the time Martin was born in 1948, his family was broke. Martin grew up in the projects, right across the street from the dock his family had built and then lost. Every day, Martin had to walk back and forth to school right past the big house the Bradys once owned. "I think it always gave me this, this sense of a lost golden age of, you know, now we were poor and we lived in the projects and we lived in an apartment. We didn't even have a car, but God we were...once we were royalty! It gave me a certain attraction to those kinds of stories of I don't know, fallen civilizations and lost empires and all of that." Martin, who was born in Bayonne, New Jersey, and is a longtime resident of Santa Fe, New Mexico, has won numerous awards, including six Hugo Awards, 16 Locust Awards and a World Fantasy Award—Life Achievement in 2012.

HORROR

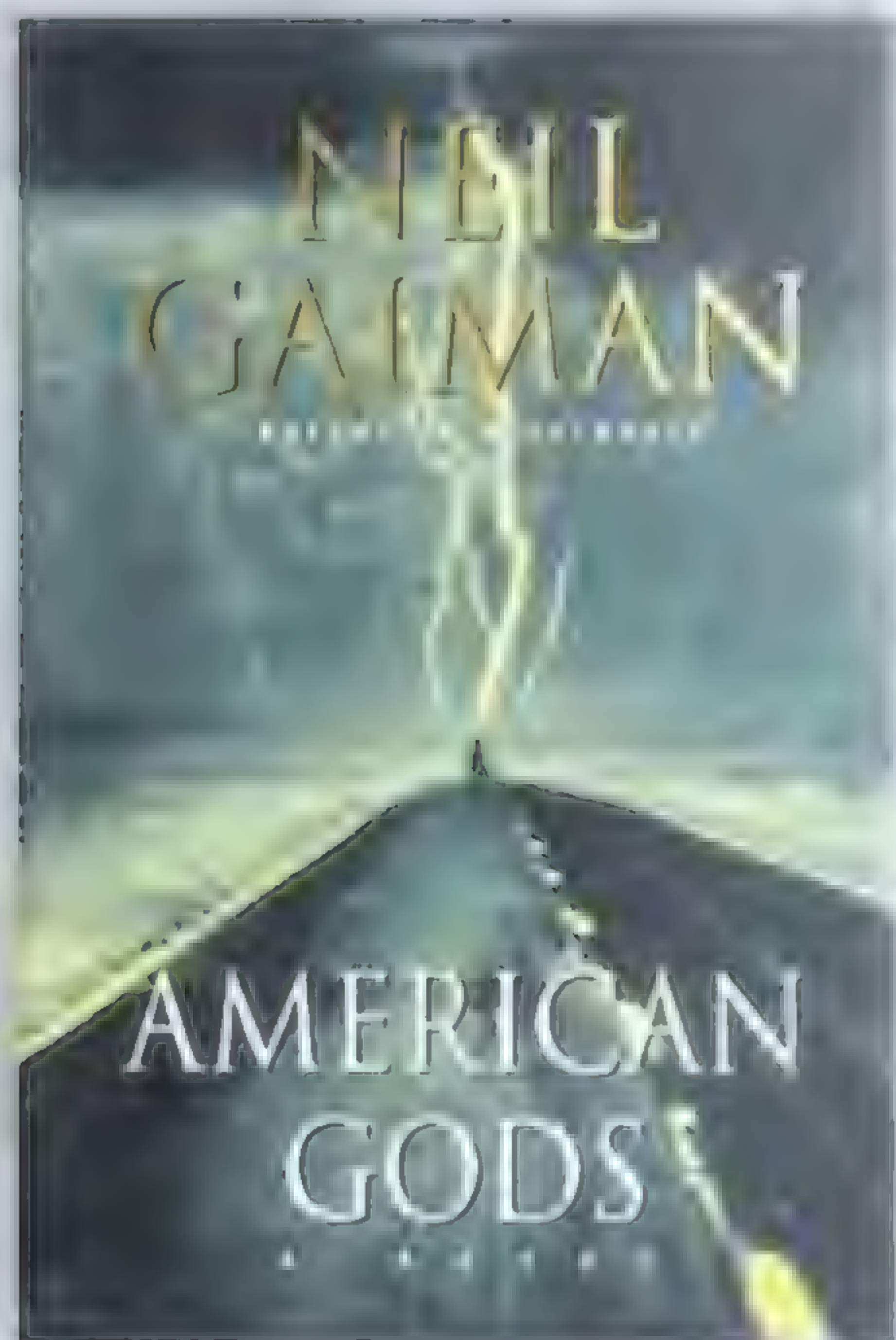
AMERICAN GODS

written by NEIL GAIMAN

As a literary mechanism for exploring American identity, a turn-of-the-millennium road trip through the U.S. seems relatively straightforward—but in Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*, it's Odin, the Norse god of war, who sets the itinerary. In the 2001 novel, Odin (or Mr. Wednesday, as he's called within its pages) hires Shadow, a recently released convict, to drive him across the U.S. Throughout their travels, he rallies fellow deities from ancient mythologies—including

manifestations of Anansi, Anubis and Loki—to his cause: a battle for America's soul against the rising gods of technology, media and the stock market. Gaiman's contributions to the science fiction and fantasy canon have been so many, so varied and so imaginative that it is hard to call one book his magnum opus. But—as evidenced by its dual Hugo and Nebula wins, and its adaptation for television almost two decades later—*American Gods* is a strong contender. —Cate Matthews

/ **ADAPTATIONS** Dark Horse Comics published a series of comic books (2017-2020) based on the novel. In 2017, the cable network Starz began airing the first of three seasons of their adaptations of *American Gods*. The first season received Primetime Emmy nominations for Outstanding Main Title Design and Outstanding Visual Effects. The second season won a Saturn Award for Best DVD or Blu-ray Television Release and garnered three Critic's Choice Award noms: Best Drama Series, Best Actor in a Drama series for Ian McShane and Best Supporting Actress in a Drama Series for Gillian Anderson. The third season was nominated for a Saturn Award for Best Fantasy Television Series. *Rolling Stone's* Rob Sheffield wrote of the series, "*American Gods* is a psychedelic spree that looks like it was designed to beat down any attempt to describe it coherently. Michael Green and Bryan Fuller...turn Neil Gaiman's 2001 novel into an outlandish theological fantasy." Sarah Jones of *The New Republic* said, "It is a dark fairytale of a country in crisis" and it "is a brilliant, despairing look at a fracturing national myth." In 2022, the German power band Blind Guardian released the song, "Secrets of the American Gods" on their album, *The God Machine*.





CHILDREN'S FANTASY

HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE

written by **J.K. ROWLING**

With his sixth year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in full swing, Harry Potter's slow march toward an inevitable final confrontation with Lord Voldemort grows ever grimmer. So the Boy Who Lived and Professor Albus Dumbledore, the school's ever-wise headmaster, attempt to discover the horrible secret behind the dark wizard's power. Marked by magical journeys into the past, long-awaited revelations and a heartbreaking final twist, the penultimate installment in J.K. Rowling's seven-book series expertly sets the stage for the story's epic conclusion. Now shouldering the full weight of his destiny, Harry sheds the teenage angst of *The Order of Phoenix* to become the young leader he was prophesied to be. As readers debate the fate of their fandom in the wake of Rowling's transphobic comments and writing, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* remains one of the books that carries the most emotional weight in the series. —**Megan McCluskey**

/ ADAPTATIONS A film adaptation was released by Warner Bros. in 2009 and was one of the highest-grossing films of the year. In 2009, Electronic Arts released a video game adaptation, and in 2011, *Lego Harry Potter: Years 5–7* video game was released by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment.

CHILDREN'S FANTASY

THE WEE FREE MEN

written by **TERRY PRATCHETT**



Katniss Everdeen has her bow and arrow; Tiffany Aching has her frying pan. The young protagonist fights to save her little brother with

ingenuity and daring in Terry Pratchett's first book about her, which exists in his sprawling and massively popular *Discworld* series. Pratchett's tale is well-paced, uproarious and filled with memorable monsters. But what pushes the novel into legendary territory are the titular wee free men: six-inch-tall pixies with Scottish accents who, in Pratchett's own words, "have seen Braveheart altogether too many times." They swear, brawl, steal and unite to aid Tiffany on her mission.

—**Andrew R. Chow**

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Terry Pratchett was born in Buckinghamshire, England, in 1948. He published his first story in his high-school magazine and would go on to be one of the U.K.'s bestselling authors of the 1990s. After being diagnosed with a rare form of early-onset Alzheimer's disease in 2007, he became an advocate for medically assisted suicide and Alzheimer's research. He continued to work, completing the 41st *Discworld* book in 2014. Pratchett, who was knighted for his services to literature in 2009, died of natural causes in 2015 at age 66.

HIGH FANTASY

MISTBORN: THE FINAL EMPIRE

written by **BRANDON SANDERSON**

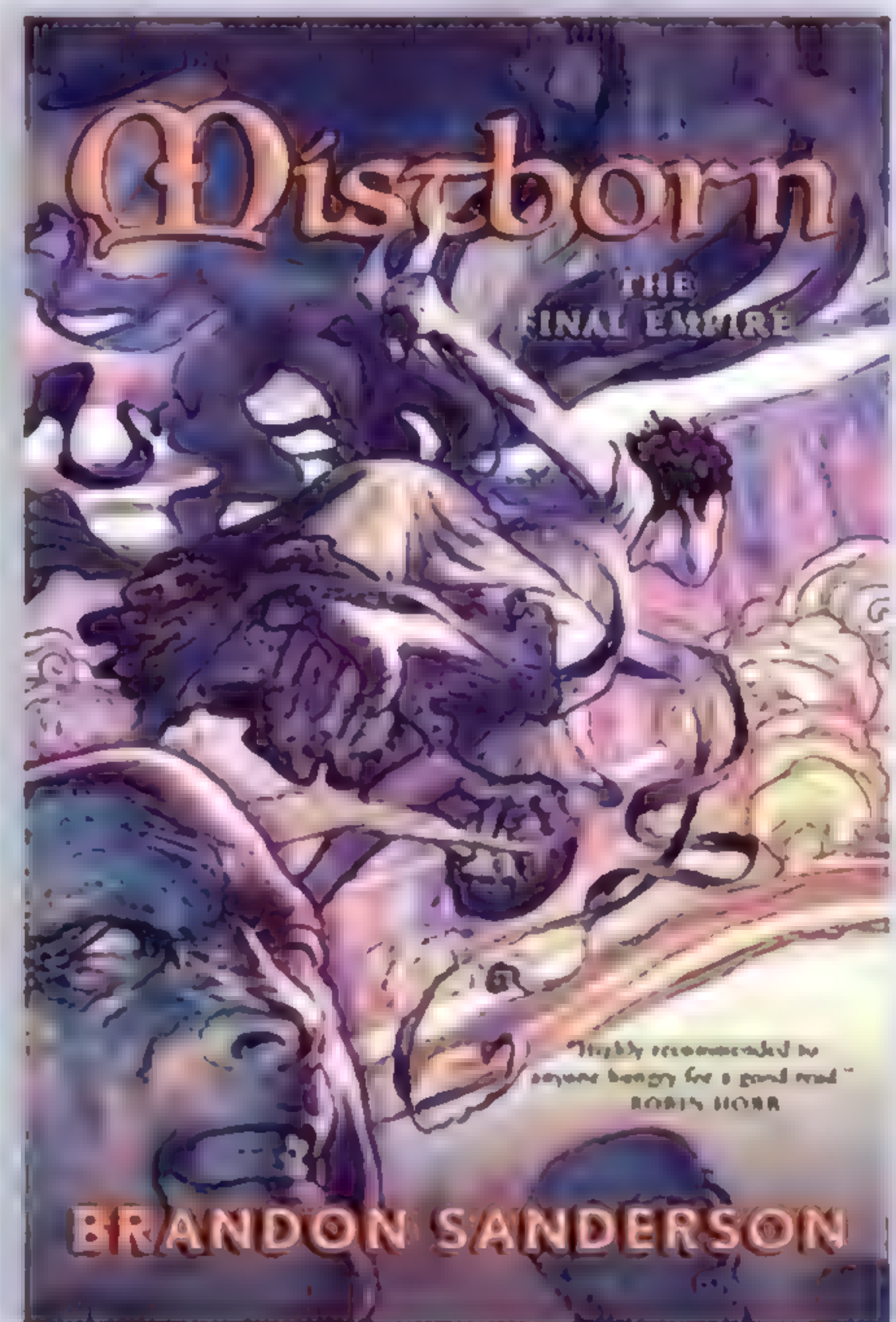
For years, Brandon Sanderson spent his nights behind the desk at a Provo, Utah hotel, churning out manuscripts that he hoped one day might take their place on shelves. *Mistborn: The Final Empire* wasn't Sanderson's first novel to find a publisher—that was 2005's *Elantris*—but it was the book that defined his approach to writing fantasy and set him on a path toward widespread recognition. Now, he's one of the genre's most beloved—and prolific—authors. With *Mistborn: The Final Empire*, Sanderson popularized his approach to crafting complex magic systems, in which the rules that govern the extraordinary have more in common with a chemical equation than with a wave of a wand. The 2006 epic fantasy follows a pair of allomancers—individuals who ingest small amounts of metal to fuel magical abilities—as they rebel against an immortal ruler's thousand-year reign. The detail with which Sanderson explores the hows and whys of allomancy in the novel, setting up a crescendo of action and adventure by its end, is a solid illustration of his own "First Law of Magics," which posits that a writer's capacity to resolve a story's conflict using magic is directly correlated with readers' understanding of how that magic works. —*Cate Matthews*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Brandon Sanderson was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1975. He received his MFA from Brigham Young University in 2004. While at BYU, he was roommates with *Jeopardy* champion and host Ken Jennings.

The Final Empire, Sanderson's second published book, came out in 2006. In 2007, Harriet McDougal, wife and editor to the late *Wheel of Time* series author Robert Jordan, approached Sanderson and asked him to complete the series. The first of three Sanderson *Wheel of Time* novels, *The Gathering Storm*, came out in 2009 and made the No. 1 spot on the *New York*

Times bestseller list. In addition to the *Mistborn* series, Sanderson penned numerous adult fiction books, short stories, novellas, graphic novels, and children's and young adult books. He has hosted the *Writing Excuses* podcast since 2008 and *Intentionally Blank* podcast since 2021. Sanderson is also known for creating Sanderson's Laws of Magic, which describes "hard magic" and "soft magic" systems. He resides with his family in Utah.



HIGH FANTASY

THE NAME OF THE WIND

written by **PATRICK ROTHFUSS**

In detailed flashbacks, Patrick Rothfuss's bestseller follows the harrowing early years of the prodigy Qvothe, a musician, magician and hardscrabble orphan making his way from a loving home to the city streets to a university in a vaguely medieval world. Looming above his daily struggles, however, is his quest to avenge the death of his parents at the hands of an ancient evil foe. Part schoolboy saga, part sweeping fantasy epic, the *Kingkiller Chronicle* trilogy that kicks off with this book is not yet complete. But Qvothe is a compelling star: a roguish, supernaturally smart underdog with wit and talent to spare. Rothfuss's descriptions of a science-based magic are technical and specific, while his attention to injustices, poverty and class-based discrimination grounds his story in a world we understand all too well.

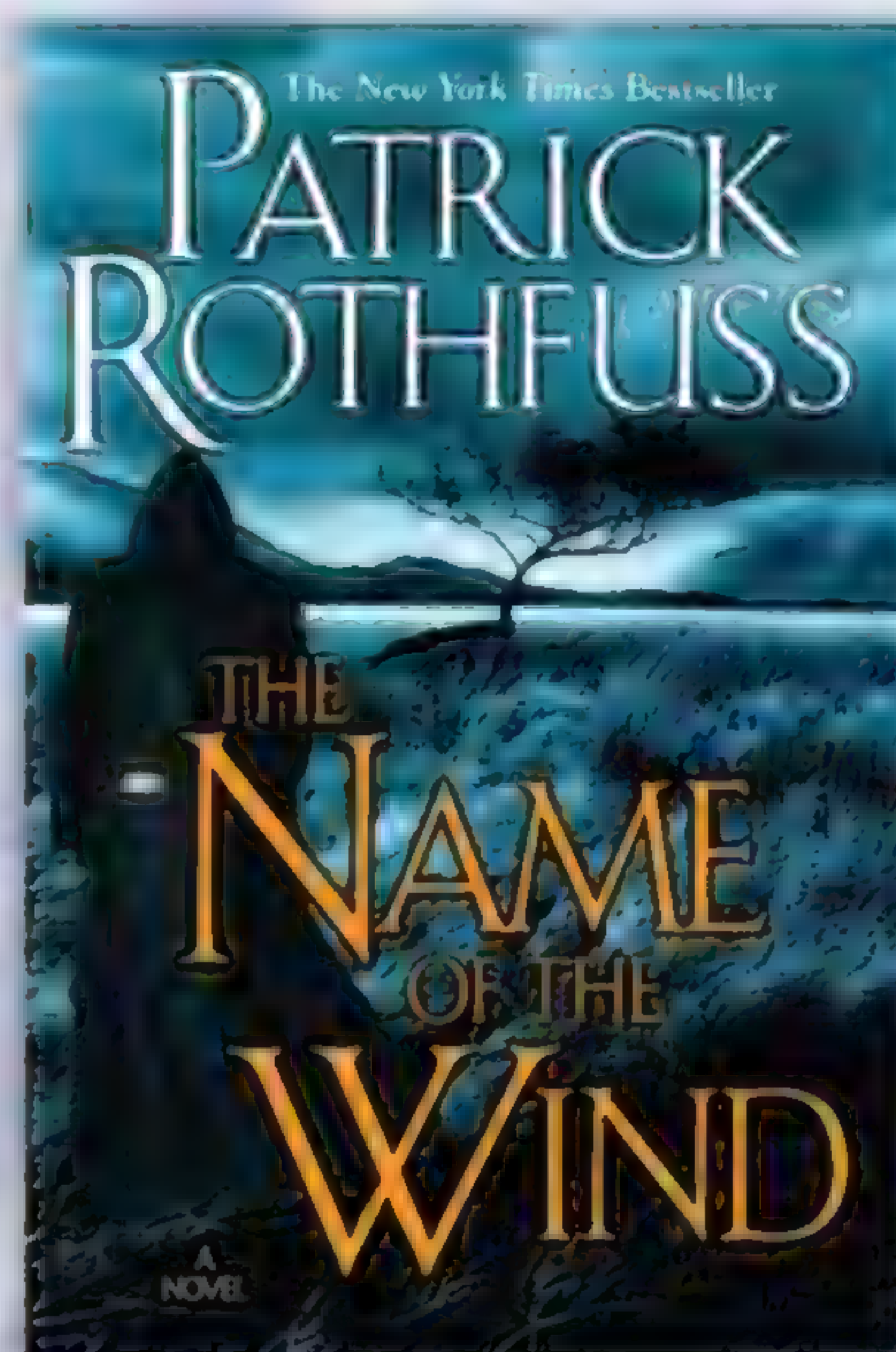
—*Raisa Bruner*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Patrick Rothfuss was born in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1973. He has a BA from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and got his MFA from the University of Washington. *The Name of the Wind*

was named one of the best books of the year by *Publishers Weekly*, and it received a Quill Award and an Alex Award. *The Wise Man's Fear* (2011), the second installment of the *Kingkiller Chronicle* trilogy debuted at the top of the *New York Times* Fantasy list. Rothfuss'

abstract strategy game *Tak*, which first appeared in *The Wise Man's Fear*, came out in 2016 and was incorporated in the Mind Sports Olympiad international competition in 2021. Rothfuss was also the co-writer on the *Rick & Morty vs. Dungeon & Dragons* limited comic book series (2018), which received an Eisner Award. In 2008, he founded Wordbuilders, a geek-centered nonprofit supporting humanitarian efforts worldwide." To date, it has raised nearly \$10 million for charities such as Heifer International and First Book.



URBAN FANTASY

CITY OF GLASS

written by **CASSANDRA CLARE**

City of Bones, the first installment in the bestselling *The Mortal Instruments* series, introduces readers to the world of Shadowhunters, a powerful line of human-angel hybrids secretly living—and slaying demons—alongside “mundanes,” or normal humans. But it’s the saga’s third entry that dramatically raises the stakes of teenage protagonists Clary Fray and Jace Wayland’s struggle to prevent the evil Valentine Morgenstern from creating a dark new order of otherworldly warriors. In the midst of a young adult fantasy boom, it was Cassandra Clare’s ability to capture the beauty and pain of young love—for heroes of varied sexual identities—coupled with her flair for the supernatural that distinguished her books from the pack. Since completing the first three volumes of *The Mortal Instruments*, Clare has expanded her Shadowhunters universe

to include four other series as well as a number of short story collections, companion books and graphic novels.

—**Megan McCluskey**

/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Cassandra Clare is the pen name for Judith Lewis, whose early life shaped her penchant for great adventures. She was born in 1973 to American parents in Tehran, Iran. Her father was a professor at Harvard Business School and took a leave from Harvard to help found and teach at the Iran Center for Management Studies between 1972 and 1974. He also taught

at UCLA and at INSEAD in France. As a child, she accompanied her family on a month-long hike in the Himalayas, living in her father’s backpack. Before she broke out as a young-adult author, she worked as a writer for various entertainment magazines and tabloids, including *The Hollywood Reporter*. According to her website, she “hopes never to have to write about Paris Hilton again.” Lewis is the granddaughter of horror film producer Max Rosenberg (*Tales from the Crypt* and *The Land That Time Forgot*). She published her first book in 2007.



SCIENCE FICTION

WHO FEARS DEATH

written by **NNEDI OKORAFOR**

To read a Nnedi Okorafor novel is to read a book featuring strong female characters. But calling Onyesonwu, the protagonist of Okorafor's World Fantasy Award-winning adult novel *Who Fears Death*, "strong" feels like an understatement. In the novel, Okorafor imagines a grim, post-apocalyptic Sudan, one where rape is employed as a weapon of war and violence can seem omnipresent. But in learning to wield magic, Onyesonwu gains the ability to set her world on a new path. Okorafor, a prolific novelist who has written Wakanda-set comics for Marvel, is known for Africanfuturist stories that through their speculative settings hold a critical mirror to our world and offer sparks of hope. Amidst the darkness of *Who Fears Death*, Onyesonwu is that hope. —*Cate Matthews*

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Nnedi Okorafor was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1974 to Igbo Nigerian parents who had traveled to the U.S. to go to school but didn't return to live in Nigeria because of civil war. As a child, her family traveled to Nigeria to visit friends and family. Okorafor was a promising track and tennis star, but complications from a spinal surgery she had at age 19 left her paralyzed. She regained the ability to walk with a cane, but her athletic career was over. She took a creative writing class on the advice of a friend, and she was writing her first novel by the end of the semester. Okorafor, who has won numerous awards for her books, is also a professor of practice at Arizona State University.



FAIRY TALE

WHERE THE MOUNTAIN MEETS THE MOON

written by **GRACE LIN**

Living with her poor parents in the valley of Fruitless Mountain, young Minli loves to listen to her father share old folktales about the Jade Dragon and the Old Man of the Moon. Determined to change her family's fate, Minli sets off on an adventure to meet the Old Man on the Moon, who she's been told has the answers she's looking for. Along the way, she's introduced to magical creatures and befriends a dragon who can't fly. Minli's exploration is depicted with joy and pockets of sadness, impressively blending, and celebrating, Chinese folklore and fairy tales. Lin, who received a 2010 Newbery Honor for the book, makes a stirring call for compassion in her protagonist's quest to better her family's fortune. —*Annabel Gutterman*

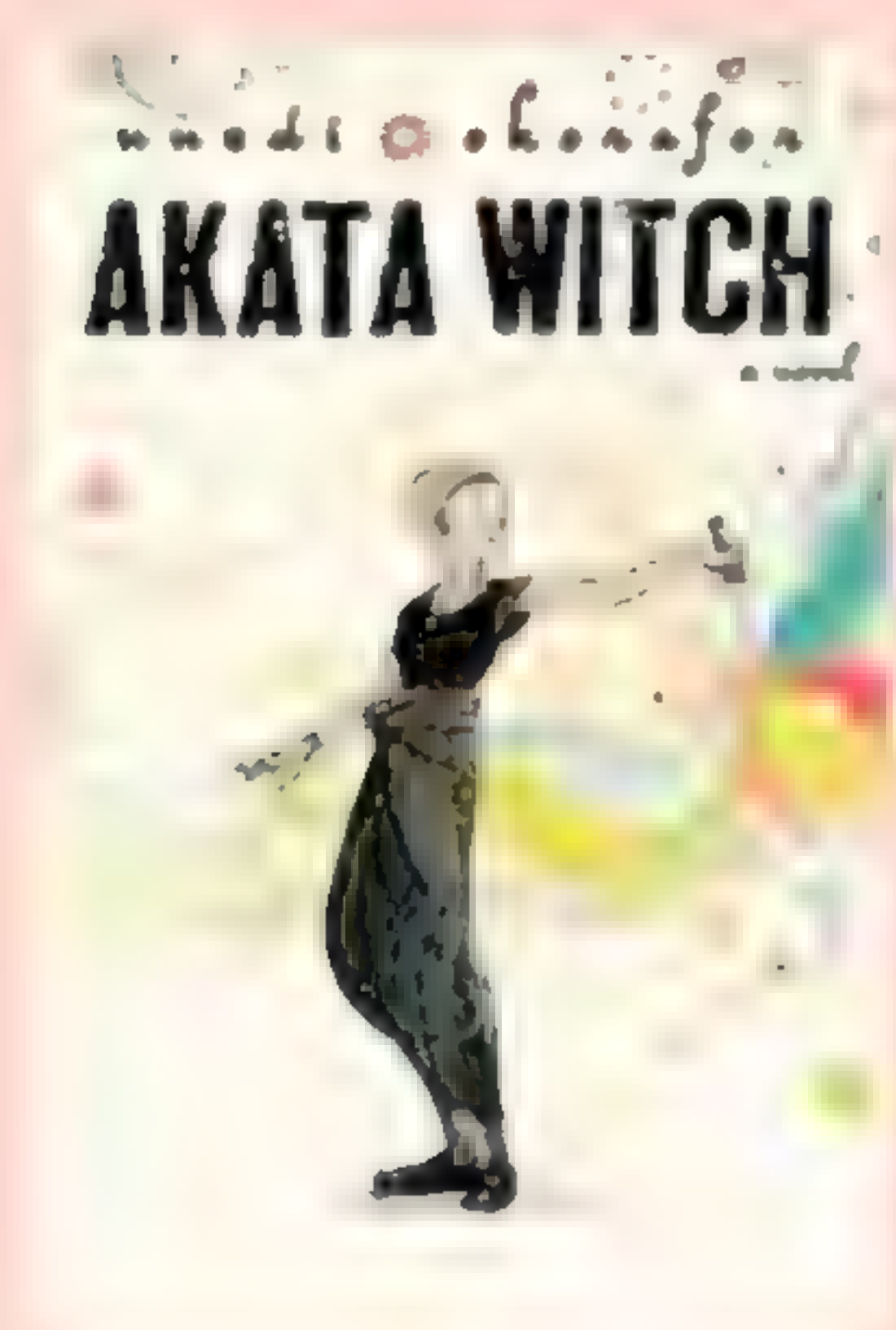
/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Taiwanese American children's book author Grace Lin was born in 1974 in Upstate New York. Her father was a doctor, and her mother was a botanist. She and her two sisters were the only Asian students in their elementary school. She is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design with a BFA in children's book illustration. She worked designing t-shirts and mugs before she published her first book, which she wrote and illustrated. Themes of cultural identity, family relationships and peace permeate her collection of dozens of books. Lin has won many awards, including the Children's Literature Legacy Award in 2022.

HIGH FANTASY

AKATA WITCH

written by **NNEDI OKORAFOR**

Born in New York to Nigerian parents, 12-year-old Sunny follows her family back to their home country, where she finds it hard to fit in. Not only is she treated like a foreigner, but she is albino and ostracized at school for her differences. Until, that is, she falls in with a new group of friends who are descended from Leopard People, mysterious practitioners of old magic tied to ancient African religions. In the world of the Leopard People, Sunny's albinism is a portent of great power, but first she has to learn how to wield it. *Akata Witch* (retitled *What Sunny Saw in the Flames* in Nigeria and the U.K. due to the derogatory meaning of "akata" in some Nigerian dialects) is the first in a trilogy by Hugo and Nebula award-winning Nigerian-American author Nnedi Okorafor. Okorafor's novels tend to reflect both her West-African heritage and American experiences, but in this series she creates a stunningly original world of African magic that draws on Nigerian folk beliefs and rituals instead of relying on the predictable tropes of Western fantasy novels. —*Aryn Baker*



SCIENCE FICTION

THE HUNDRED THOUSAND KINGDOMS

written by **N.K. JEMISIN**

With a record-setting three consecutive Hugo Awards for Best Novel to her name, 2020 MacArthur Fellow N.K. Jemisin is one of the most celebrated authors working in science fiction and fantasy. Her ascent to the genre's pinnacle began with the publication of *The Hundred Thousand Kingdoms* in 2010. As with a number of her later works, the former psychologist's debut depicts a society that oppresses those who might otherwise wield power: in this case, captive gods made to serve the ethereal city of Sky who become the unlikely allies of Yeine Darr, an heir to the very throne that subjugates them. The novel, which blends fantasy with romance and social critique, won the Locus Award for Best First Novel, establishing Jemisin as a writer on the rise and spotlighting her talent for building complex worlds filled with dangerously flawed people. —*Cate Matthews*

/ OTHER WORKS The other two volumes in *The Inheritance Trilogy* are *The Broken Kingdoms*, which also came out in 2010, and *The Kingdom of Gods*, published in 2011.

ROMANTIC FANTASY

THE NIGHT CIRCUS

written by **ERIN MORGENSTERN**

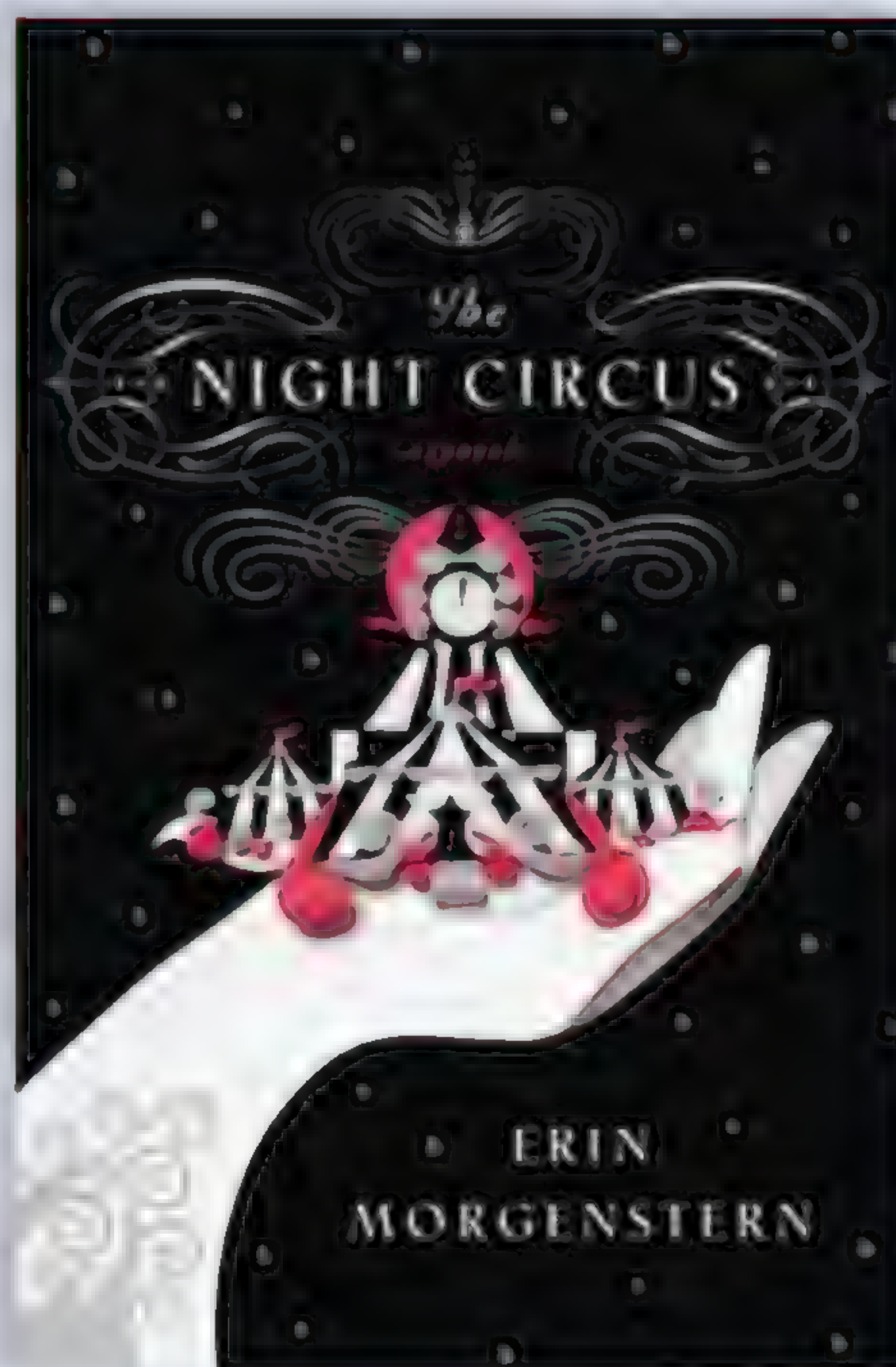
Two young students locked into a magical competition, the rules of which neither understands, do battle with feats of astounding imagination powered by their ill-advised romance. Their stage is the mysterious Cirque des Rêves, a circus of dreams that appears only at night, and travels the world with no set schedule. Peopled with clockwork ciphers, the real heartbeat of Erin Morgenstern's debut novel, *The Night Circus*, is not in the love affair between the doomed rivals turned lovers—each of whom can only win by killing the other—but in the circus itself. With its breathtaking displays of magic and sumptuous illusions, it's a setting so richly detailed and beguiling it becomes an indelible character.

—**Aryn Baker**

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Author and multimedia artist Erin Morgenstern was raised in Marshfield, Massachusetts. *The Night Circus* was her first novel. She started it in November 2003

as part of National Novel Writing Month, when participants are encouraged to write a 50,000-word manuscript in 30 days. Over the next two Novembers, Morgenstern worked on what would eventually become *The Night Circus*. She was rejected by 30 literary agents before signing with Inkwell Management in 2010, who sold her book to Doubleday later that year. It spent seven weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list, received the Guardian First Book Award in 2011 and an Alex Award in 2012.

"I never really planned what I was going to write beforehand and in 2005, when I got extremely bored with my novel-in-progress, I sent all my characters to the circus. For the two subsequent Novembers, I wrote pages upon pages about the circus, and then spent a few years turning it into something book-shaped," she told *Publishers Weekly* in 2011. In addition to publishing her second novel, *The Starless Sea*, in 2019, Morgenstern wrote and painted *The Phantomwise Tarot: A 78-Card Deck and Guidebook* in 2022.



ROMANTIC FANTASY

THE SONG OF ACHILLES

written by **MADELINE MILLER**

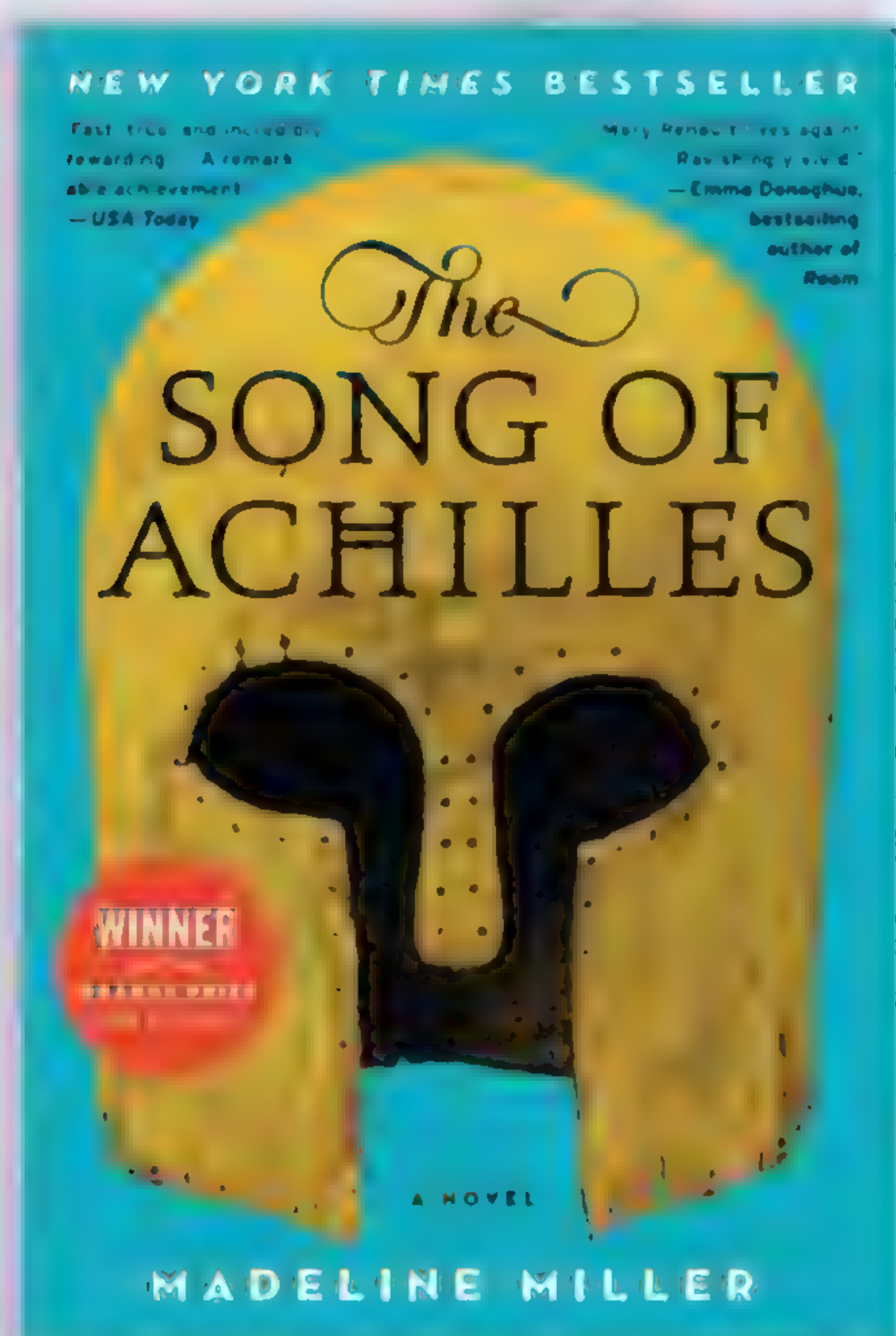
To say that *The Song of Achilles* is simply a retelling of Homer's *Iliad* from a different perspective would be to overlook the depth of emotion that Madeline Miller spent 10 years infusing into the tragic romance that drives her debut. With their fates already written—and inexorably entwined—the story follows exiled prince Patroclus and famed warrior Achilles, “best of

all the Greeks,” from their childhood training with the centaur Chiron through their years laying siege to Troy as soldiers in Agamemnon's army. In the tradition of renowned historical novelist Mary Renault, whose work centered on ancient Greece, Miller crafts a heartbreaking backstory for two of the most pivotal players in Homer's Trojan War. Miller is by no means the first to suggest that the nature of the relationship between her narrator and Achilles was that of lovers, but it's her willingness to chart a course that strays outside established myth that brings new life to these legendary heroes.—*Megan McCluskey*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Madeline Miller was born in Boston in 1978 and grew up on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, where she frequented the Greek and Roman galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her mother, a

librarian, read her the *Iliad* as a bedtime story when she was five years old. “I wanted gods and monsters,” she told the *New York Times* in 2018. Miller went on to get her masters in classical studies at Brown University and an MFA from the Yale School of Drama. She wrote her debut novel, *The Song of Achilles*, while teaching high school Latin. It became a *New York Times* bestseller and won the Orange Prize for Fiction (now the Women's Prize for Fiction). *The Song of Achilles* saw a resurgence in 2021—nearly nine times what it sold when it was first published—after it was featured on a TikTok video called “books that will make you sob” by @moongirlreads. Miller told the *New York Times* that she didn't even know about the video until her publisher pointed it out, “I feel speechless in the best way,” she said. “Could there be anything better for a writer than to see people taking their work to heart?”



SCIENCE FICTION

THE BONE CLOCKS

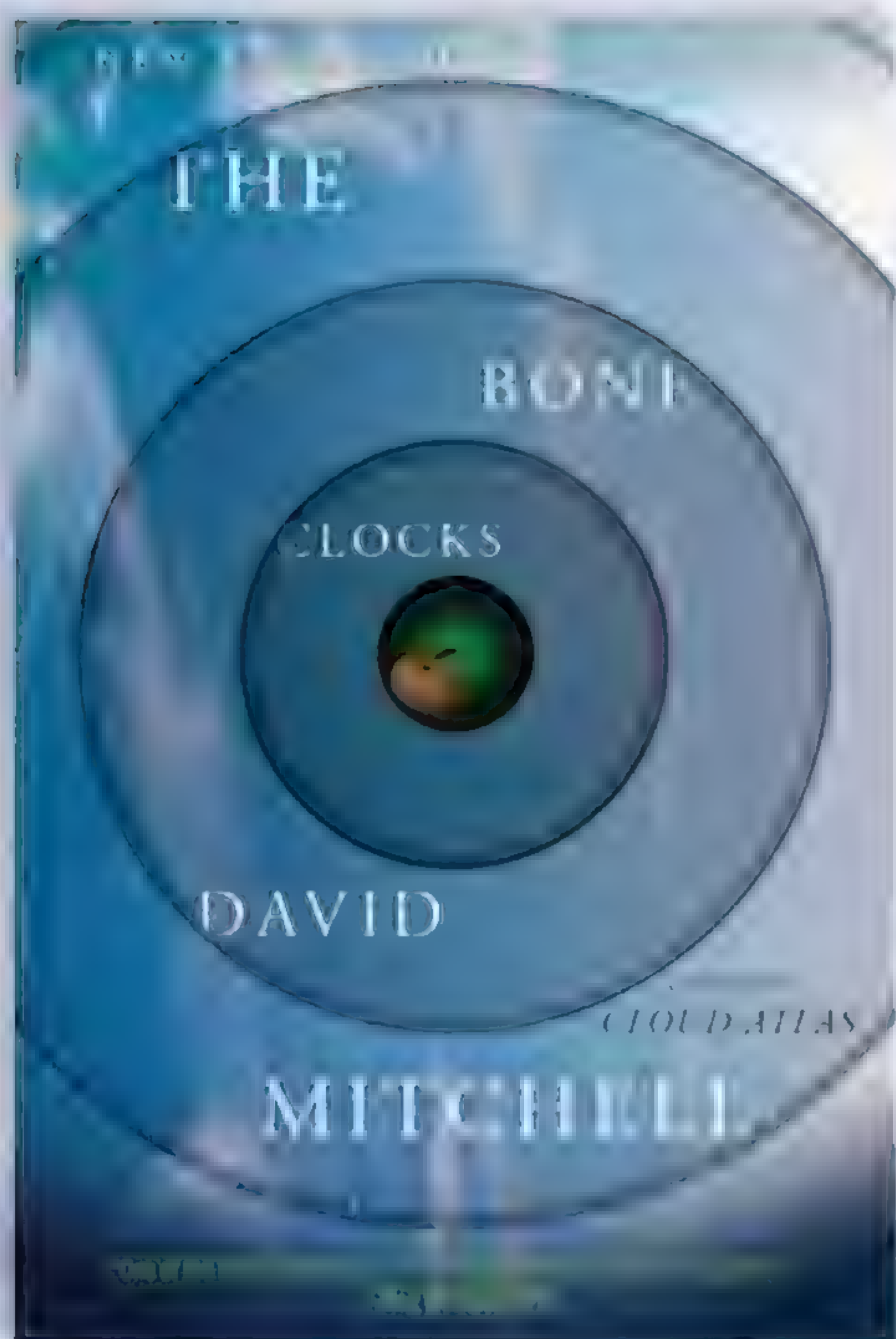
written by **DAVID MITCHELL**

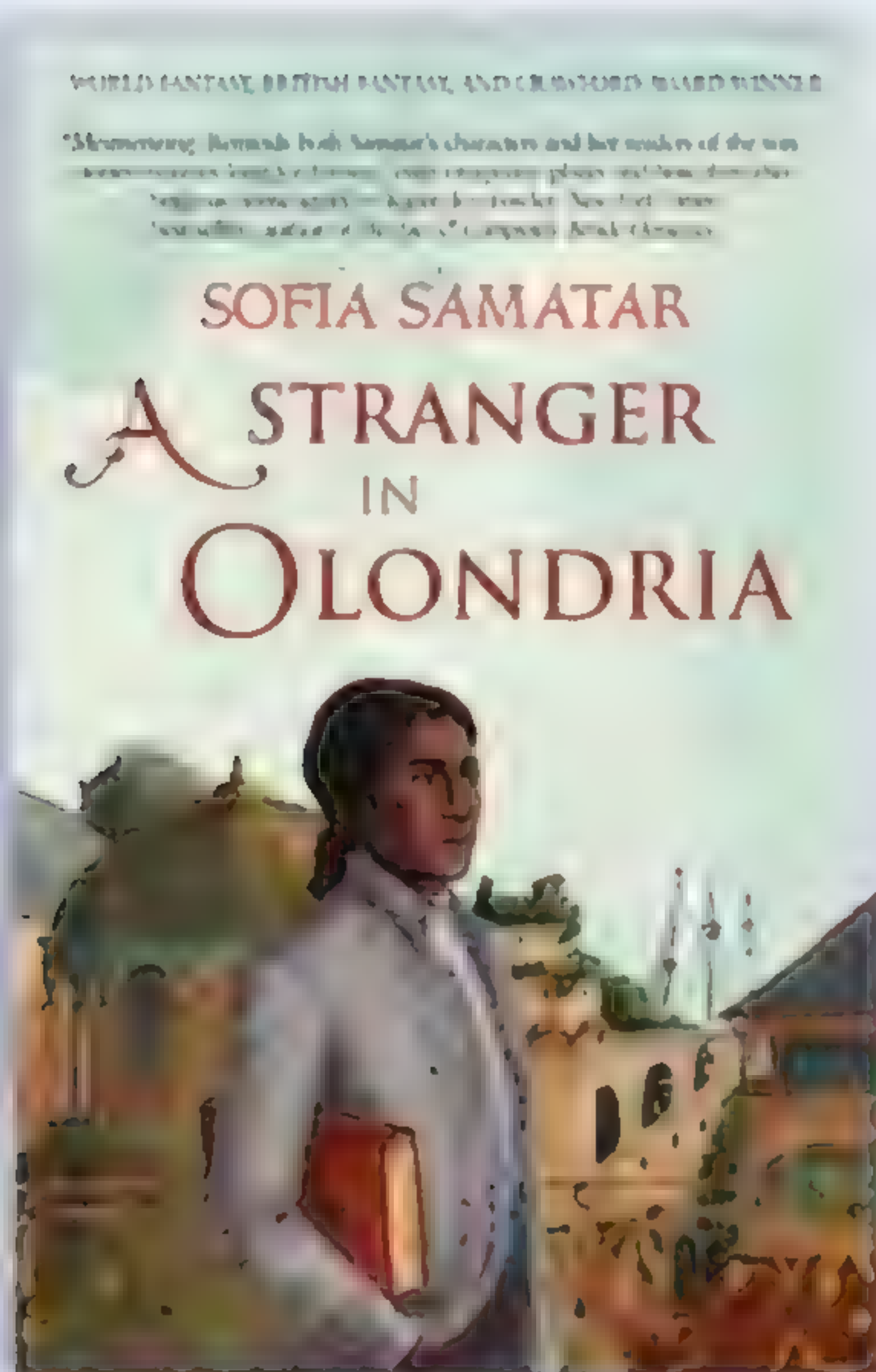
David Mitchell may be best known for *Cloud Atlas*, the sci-fi book published a decade earlier, but 2014's *The Bone Clocks* is equally ambitious and intricate. The novel, told through the perspectives of a half dozen characters, spans decades and offers a formidably inventive cosmology as its background and connective tissue. The British writer is a master of plot, and so it would be a shame to reveal what's beyond each turn through the labyrinth of this narrative maze. But suffice it to say that this is the sort of absorbing

fantasy for which one should clear their schedule. Along the way, Mitchell takes on big ideas, like loyalty, transhumanism, free will and mortality, all seamlessly integrated into the story. It's not a perfect novel, but it does, somehow, make what most would describe as "magic" feel as tangible as the book in one's hand.
—*Elijah Wolfson*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR David Mitchell was born in Southport, England, in 1969. Mitchell has a reputation for genre fluidity, given a body of work that encompasses historical fiction (*The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet*, 2010), bildungsroman (*Black Swan Green*, 2006), science fiction (*The Bone Clocks*) and a combination of the above (*Cloud Atlas*, 2004). In 2020, *TIME*'s Dan Stewart asked Mitchell if he was a platypus, referring to his genre fluidity. Mitchell chuckled, "All artists are. Actually, all human beings are. It's not just within art, it's what kind of person you are. We all hit the speed bump of reductivism." It's the price he accepts for his interest in "hybridizing genre," he says. Mitchell was on the 2007 *TIME*100, a list of the most influential people in the world. In 2014, horror master Stephen King told *Rolling Stone* that *The Bone Clocks* was one of the best books of the year, lamenting on how traditional critics shun fantasy and science fiction.





EPIC FANTASY

A STRANGER IN OLONDRIA

written by **SOFIA SAMATAR**

This slowly-unraveling, exquisitely-detailed novel made the poet Sofia Samatar a World Fantasy Award winner and a Nebula Award finalist. It follows Jevick, a young writer who is obsessed with the fantastical, distant world of Olondria, where his father is a merchant. But when Jevick is called there after he inherits the family business, he becomes haunted by a ghost—and is unwittingly pulled into Olondria's power struggle. The novel unfolds in waves of *Game of Thrones*-level twists, all while its fantastical world-building pulls from South Asian, Middle Eastern and African cultures to offer a welcome departure from Eurocentric fantasy. —**Andrew R. Chow**

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Sofia Samatar was born in Indiana, where her father was going to college, and was raised as a Swiss Mennonite. After she got her master's in African languages and literature from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Samatar lived in South Sudan and Egypt for 12 years before returning to UW-Madison to get her Ph.D. She is a professor at James Madison University. *A Stranger in Olondria* is her first novel.

YOUNG ADULT FANTASY

ANGELFALL

written by **SUSAN EE**

Northern California is left devastated when angels of the apocalypse descend from the sky with the intent of destroying the world. There, 17-year-old Penryn lives with her younger sister Paige, who is disabled, and their schizophrenic mother. While trying to escape their apartment, Paige is abducted by an angel. At the same time, a wounded angel is left for dead, but Penryn nurses him back to health in the hopes that he'll know where his fellow angels took her sister. Together, they travel to San Francisco to rescue Paige, and risk everything in order to get her back. Penryn is a refreshing and realistic heroine in this moody dystopian universe, which Susan Ee captures through gritty and electrifying prose. It's Penryn's rise as such a fierce protagonist that makes *Angelfall*, which Ee self-published year before it was re-released by Amazon Children's Publishing in 2012, such a captivating read. The love that drives her heroism is a gutting reflection on the strength of sisterhood. —**Annabel Gutterman**



HISTORICAL FANTASY

THE BURIED GIANT

written by **KAZUO ISHIGURO**

Nobel laureate Kazuo Ishiguro writes philosophical novels clothed in the conventions of popular genres, from historical fiction in *The Remains of the Day* to dystopian sci-fi in *Never Let Me Go*. This approach isn't a gimmick so much as a way of accessing the perfect metaphor to communicate a big, unruly idea without sacrificing emotional weight. Ishiguro's 2015 foray into fantasy, *The Buried Giant*, takes place in a mythical post-Arthurian England afflicted by a mysterious mist that clouds inhabitants' long-term memories. Its heroes, elderly Britons Axl and his beloved wife Beatrice, suddenly recall that they once had a son, and embark on a quest to find him. On a path littered with dragons, monks, a certain Sir Gawain and an inscrutable Saxon warrior, the couple find their commitment tested. And as their journey unfolds, it becomes apparent that the Nagasaki-born, Japanese-British author Ishiguro is wrestling with the imperialist legacies of his native and adopted nations, as well as with the ambiguous ethics of preserving traumatic historical memories. Though some critics have questioned the

book's structural integrity, there's no denying the power of watching Ishiguro's grand themes flow with messy profundity into the lives of these archetypal characters.

—**Judy Berman**



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Nagasaki in 1954, Kazuo Ishiguro moved to England at age 5 when his father took a job as an oceanographer. He has said that his parents never planned to stay in England as long as they did. He currently lives in London with his wife and daughter. Ishiguro



spoke to TIME in 2015 after the release of *The Buried Giant*, telling Lev Grossman, "I'm a kind of plain writer—that's always my style." Ishiguro won the Whitbread Book of the Year Award for his second novel, *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), and his third, *The Remains of the Day* (1989), won the Booker Prize and was made into a film starring Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson. In 2005, TIME declared another of his works, *Never Let Me Go*, one of the 100 greatest English-language novels published since the magazine's inception in 1923. In 2018, Ishiguro was knighted for his services to literature.

YOUNG ADULT FANTASY

AN EMBER IN THE ASHES

written by **SABAA TAHIR**

What is it like to never feel safe? The question is at the center of Sabaa Tahir's bruising debut young adult novel. Laia lives under the Martial Empire, where she's never to defy the Emperor unless she wants to risk her family's lives, and her powerless existence is made even worse when her brother is arrested. In order to rescue him, she makes a deal with the rebels and becomes a slave at the Empire's military academy, where she spies for the people who have agreed to bring her brother home. It's there that she meets

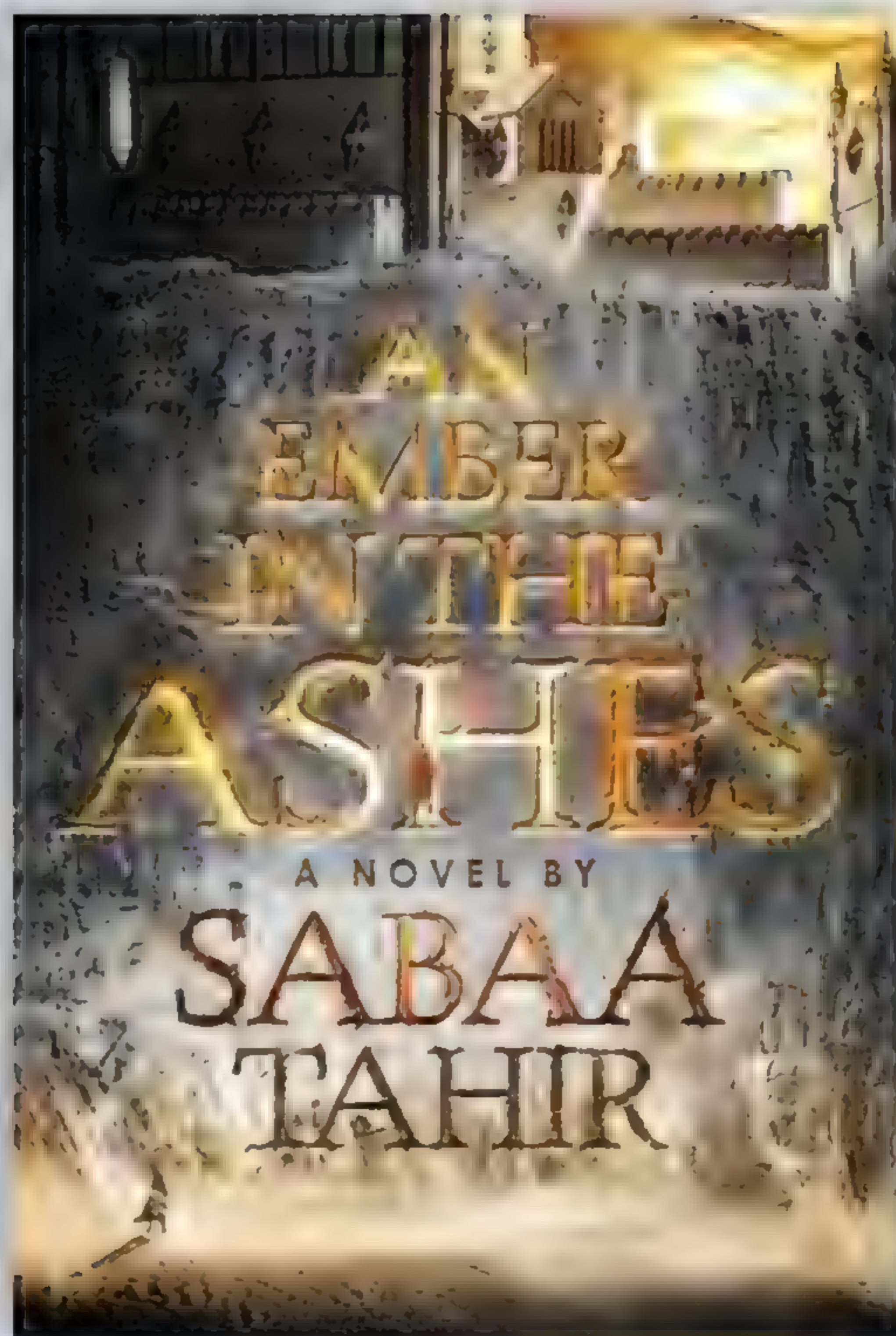
Elias, the school's top soldier, who desperately wants to escape the tyranny he's been born into. Tahir flips between their perspectives, revealing their violent world, fractured by class and haunted by forces both strange and unsettling. Tahir imbues her dystopian setting with elements of fantasy that help create an unforgettable narrative about finding hope even in the most dire of circumstances. —*Annabel Gutterman*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Sabaa

Tahir grew up in the Mojave Desert in Ridgecrest, California, the daughter of Pakistani immigrants. In a 2022 TIME profile, she recalled when a classmate at her high school

probed her about whether she had a green card. Her family owned an 18-room motel off the main road of their isolated, majority-white town. Tahir remembered countless mispronunciations of her name and violent threats. "We felt it every day," said Tahir, "the things kids said to me at school—asking questions that indicated not just a lack of knowledge, but disdain. ... So many of us who feel marginalized, we hold all this anger inside, and we can't express it without potentially serious consequences." Tahir's *Ember in the Ashes*, which debuted #2 on the *New York Times* Young Adult Bestseller list and won a People's Choice Award, is the first of a four-part series.



SCIENCE FICTION

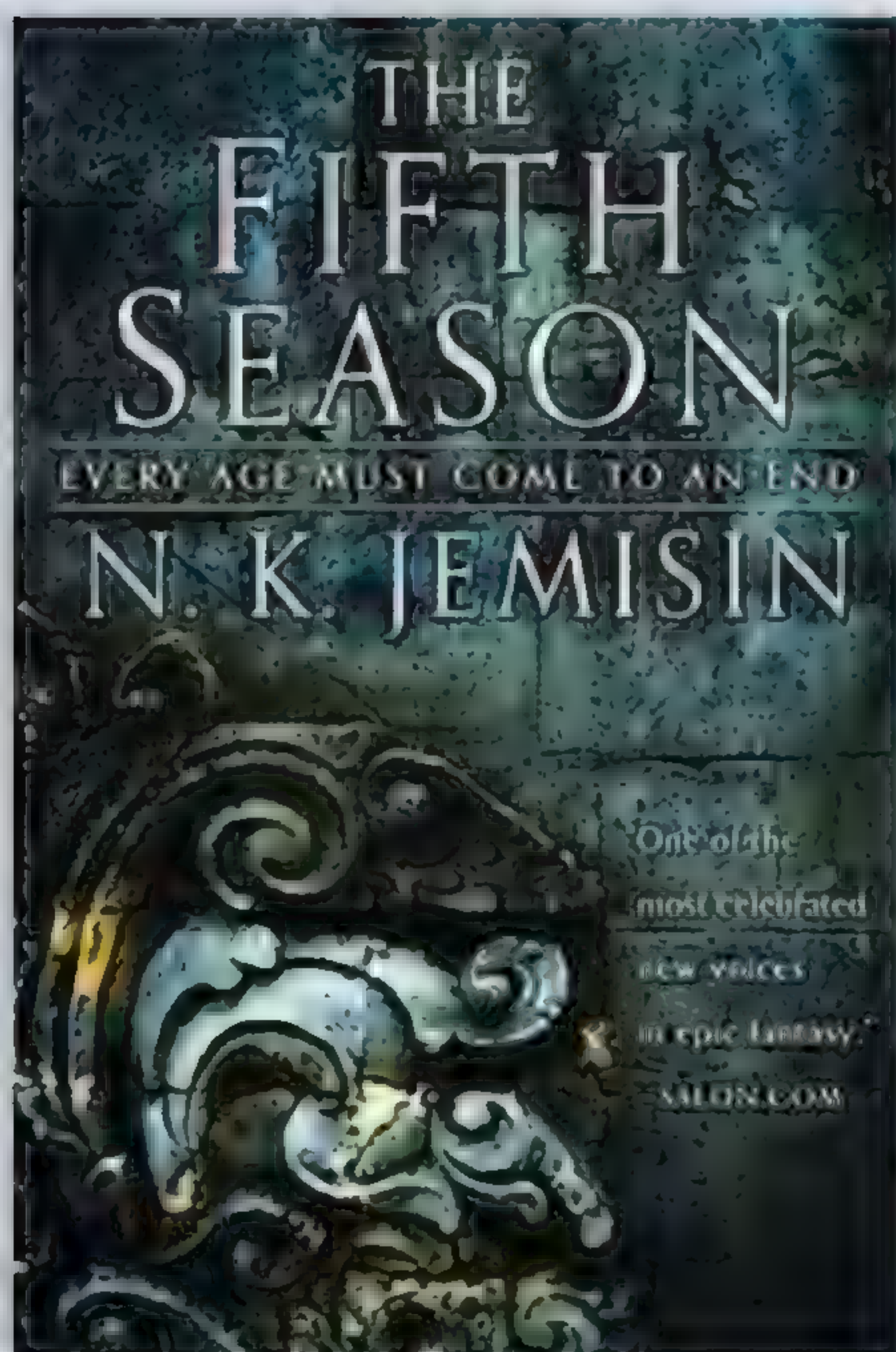
THE FIFTH SEASON

written by N.K. JEMISIN

If her debut novel, *The Hundred Thousand Kingdoms*, established N.K. Jemisin as an author on the ascent, it was *The Fifth Season*—and its history-making Hugo Award win in 2016, when Jemisin became the first Black author to take home Best Novel—that launched her into the science fiction and fantasy stratosphere. *The Fifth Season*, the first entry in Jemisin's *Broken Earth* trilogy, takes place in the Stillness, a counterintuitively named continent beset by cataclysm. There, apocalypses are so regular and so devastating that they more than earn their place

on the calendar. Magic users known as orogenes can quell the Stillness' deadly quakes, but that talent is rare, and those who have it are under constant threat of violence. There is a grim majesty to Jemisin's storytelling throughout the novel, and an extraordinary artistry to how she unwinds its interlocking narratives and explores the systems that constrain its characters. —*Cate Matthews*

/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Nora Keita Jemisin was born in Iowa City, Iowa, in 1972, while her parents were completing their master's degrees at the University of Iowa. She grew up in New York City and Mobile, Alabama. She has a psychology degree from Tulane and a Master of Education from the University of Maryland. Jemisin worked as a counselor before she became a full-time writer. Her fantastical stories are anchored in complex societal systems and fully-imagined new worlds—all with fault lines lying in wait—that aim to help us better understand our own. "The good guys don't always win, the bad guys don't always lose, and either way, the ones who suffer most will be the people who were already struggling to get by. This is what both classic and modern fantasy teach us, however: that you have to fight anyway," she wrote for TIME in 2020.



MAGICAL REALISM

GET IN TROUBLE

written by **KELLY LINK**

Nine stories comprise this eclectic and dark collection, which was a finalist for the 2016 Pulitzer Prize. Three-time Nebula award winner Kelly Link kicks off *Get in Trouble* with a story about a teenager who is left to take care of the “summer people” in the cottage behind her home when her father flees town. In classic Link fashion, these people are not people at all, but instead mysterious creatures who shape a sharp narrative concerned with class, friendship and human connection. It’s simultaneously bizarre, funny, disturbing and unpredictable—and it’s indicative of Link’s strength at blending elements of fantasy with commentary on the mundanities of daily life. Not every story is typical fantasy fare—though the collection features ghost boyfriends and demon lovers—but together they challenge the boundaries of the genre, and, like the best of fantasy, push us to question the very notion of our reality. —*Annabel Gutterman*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Kelly Link was born in Miami in 1969. She has a degree from Columbia University and a MFA from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and currently lives in Northampton, Massachusetts. She was a 2018 MacArthur Fellow and received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Link and her husband, sci-fi writer and editor

Gavin Grant, co-founded Small Beer Press and operate Book Moon, a new and used bookstore in Easthampton, Massachusetts.

HIGH FANTASY

THE GRACE OF KINGS

written by **KEN LIU**



In a 2016 interview, Ken Liu—an author and translator who has been instrumental in bringing Chinese-language genre fiction to English-speaking

audiences—described his first novel, *The Grace of Kings*, as “War and Peace with silk-and-bamboo airships.” The comparison was apt: novels less complex (or less populated) than Tolstoy’s classic might risk selling Liu’s sprawling epic fantasy short. The 2015 novel, the first installment in the Hugo and Nebula winner’s *Dandelion Dynasty* trilogy, features magical books, intervening gods and Liu’s innovative “silkpunk” aesthetic—a reimagining of the technological landscape, complete with flying battle kites, that takes inspiration from East Asian history. Informed by similarly sweeping works, including *The Iliad* and *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *The Grace Of Kings* chronicles a rebellion that turns two foils—a bandit and the son of a nobleman—into friends, as well as the forces that subsequently tear them apart. —*Cate Matthews*

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Ken Liu was born in China and moved to California with his parents at age 11. He is a graduate of Harvard Law School and worked as a software engineer, a lawyer, and as a consultant on technology litigation. He started writing fiction in 2002 and has won numerous awards.



ROMANTIC FANTASY

THE WRATH & THE DAWN

written by **RENÉE AHDIEH**

Khalid is the 18-year-old Caliph of Khorasan who is known for inviting a new bride into his home each evening just to have her killed by sunrise. When 16-year-old Shahrzad's best friend falls victim to Khalid's murderous ways, she volunteers to marry the cruel king herself so she can seek her revenge. But as they get to know each other, and as magical secrets about the kingdom come to light, Shahrzad realizes that Khalid may not be as evil as he seems. This inventive young adult retelling of *The Arabian Nights* walks a delicate line in its depiction of such a monstrous man, but puts the power in the hands of a courageous heroine who is determined to stop the senseless brutalities inflicted upon so many women. —*Annabel Gutterman*

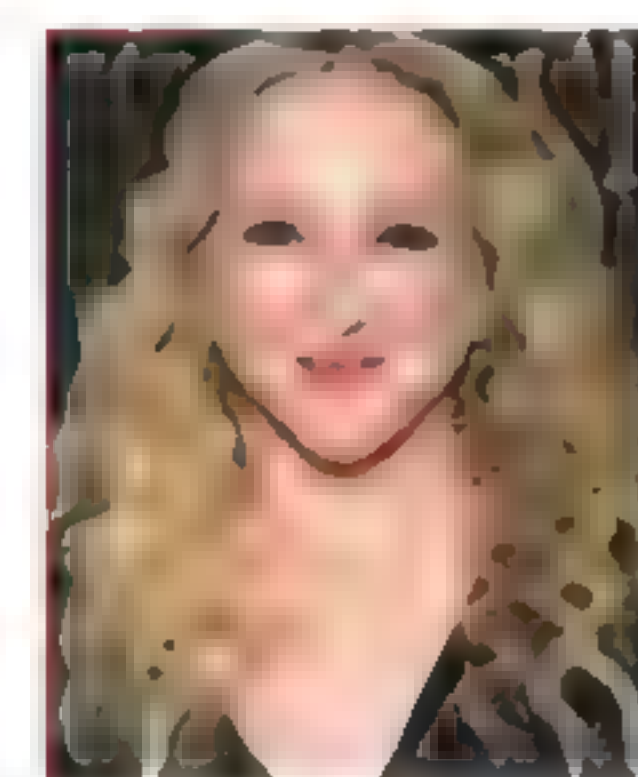
/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Renée Ahdieh spent the first part of her life living in her mother's home country of South Korea before moving to the U.S. Her stories typically feature courageous heroines. "The idea of strong female characters always grates on my nerves because we don't have entire panels or dialogues on writing strong male characters, it's a given. I want to create multifaceted characters that display many kinds of strength," she told *Publisher's Weekly* in 2017.

YOUNG ADULT FANTASY

SIX OF CROWS

written by **LEIGH BARDUGO**

In the bustling city of Ketterdam, a magic-infused version of 17th-century Amsterdam, 17-year-old gang leader Kaz "Dirtyhands" Brekker has made a name for himself as a criminal wunderkind who's willing to do any job—if the price is right. So when Kaz is offered a shot to pull off the heist of a lifetime (rescuing a scientist imprisoned in the neighboring country of Fjerda's impenetrable Ice Court) in exchange for a tremendous reward, he must choose his crew carefully. Accompanied by acrobat-spy Inej, sharpshooter Jesper, engineer Wylan, magical healer Nina and former Fjerdan soldier Matthias, Kaz sets out on a deadly mission that could change the course of their world forever. In *Six of Crows*, young adult fiction phenom Leigh Bardugo returns to the Grishaverse, the expansive setting of her critically acclaimed *Shadow and Bone* trilogy, to launch a new duology. The bestseller infuses fantasy storytelling with social commentary on real-world issues like classism, oppression and human trafficking. —*Megan McCluskey*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leigh Bardugo was born in Jerusalem in 1975 and raised in Los Angeles. She is a graduate of Yale

University, where she was a member of the Wolf's Head Society. Bardugo's *Six of Crows* and *Shadow and Bone* (2012) were adapted for the 2021 Netflix series, *Shadow and Bone*.

URBAN FANTASY

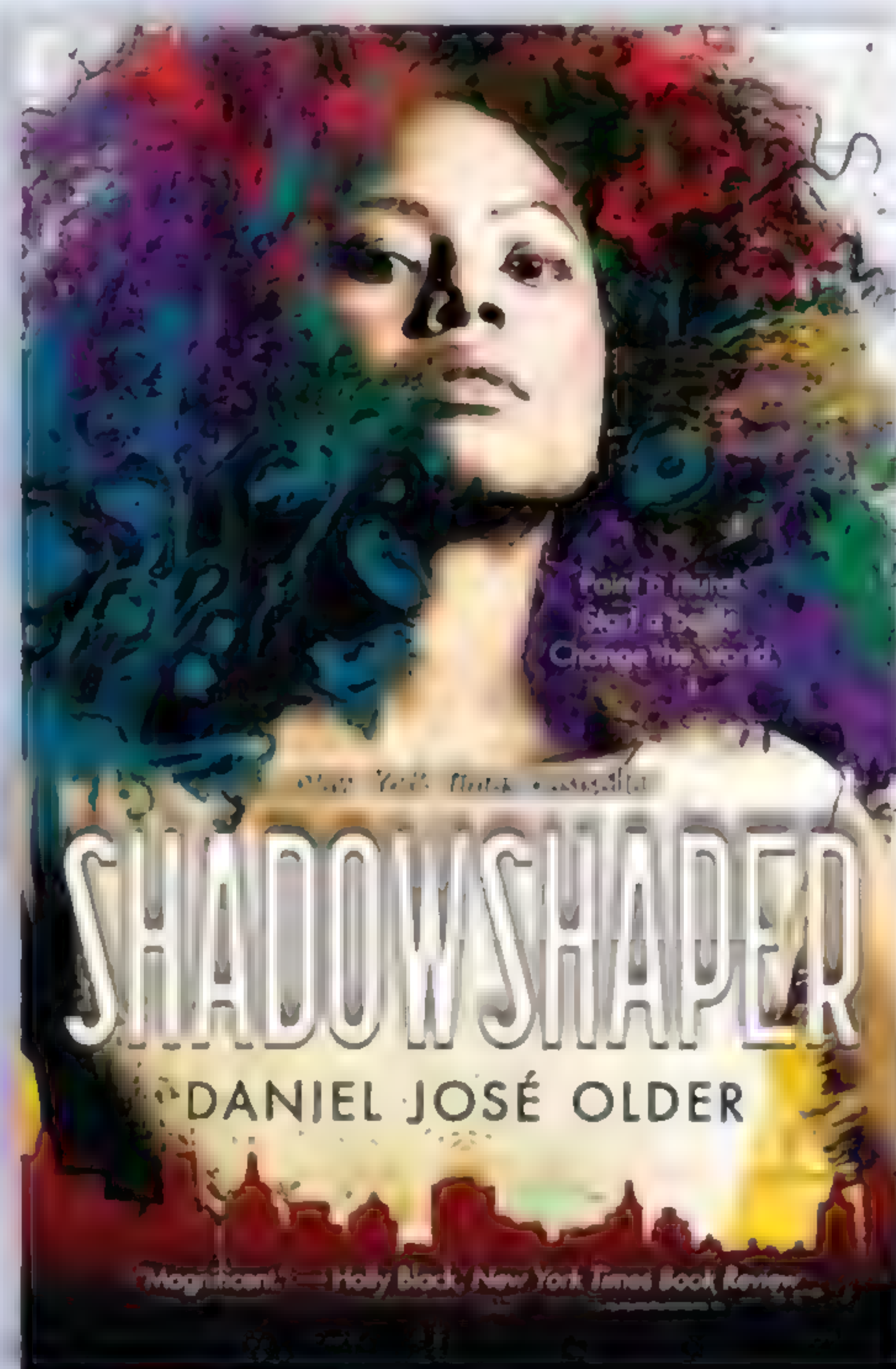
SHADOWSHAPER

written by **DANIEL JOSÉ OLDER**

The streets—and especially the street art—of Brooklyn burst with life in the propulsive first volume of Daniel José Older's *Shadowshaper Cypher* series. A young-adult novel of unusual sophistication, *Shadowshaper* chronicles the coming-of-age of a singular hero: Sierra Santiago, a bold teenage artist living with her Afro-Boricua extended family in a brownstone. Her summer mural project turns supernatural when she notices that a painting on the side of a nearby building, which memorializes an old friend of her ailing grandfather's, is shedding tears that weren't there the previous day. Suddenly, Sierra is entangled in a parallel realm of spirits imported to Brooklyn by immigrant artists known as shadowshapers—a group that includes Grandpa Lazaro, who's unable to explain what he's gotten her into. But she'd better figure it out soon, because someone is killing off that older generation of shadowshapers, one by one. *Shadowshaper* may be a page-turner, but it's also an allegory that touches on timely issues like gentrification, cultural appropriation, sexism and colorism without feeling pedantic. Combining that social commentary with magic, humor, PG-13 romance, Puerto Rican culture, a reverence for creative work and Older's keen ear for the way teens speak, it's as profound a representation as you could want of a young person's New York City in the 21st century. —*Judy Berman*

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Daniel José Older was an EMT in New York City, saving lives by day and writing at night, before he broke out as a young adult writer with the publication of *Half-Resurrection Blues* in 2015. Older is dedicated to making the young adult fantasy genre more diverse. "When we create worlds based on this world that don't include diversity, we're lying. We aren't being honest as authors," he told *The Guardian*

in 2014. Older also launched a petition to stop using a bust of H.P. Lovecraft, a known racist, as the World Fantasy Award trophy. The petition was signed by over 2,500 people and the bust was retired the following year. "Writers of color have always had to struggle with the question of how to love a genre that seems so intent on proving it doesn't love us back. We raised our voices collectively, en masse, and the World Fantasy folks heard us," Older told *The Guardian* after the decision.



SCIENCE FICTION

ALL THE BIRDS IN THE SKY

written by **CHARLIE JANE ANDERS**

In a great war over the fate of humanity, what will prevail: science or magic? The question propels this unconventional fantasy love story, which finds two childhood friends driven apart by their differences. Patricia is a witch with magical powers, while Laurence is a tech genius with a time machine. After becoming estranged in their adolescence, the pair is reunited in adulthood, just as the planet seems to be tilting toward self-destruction. They hold opposing views on how to save the world and, of course, fall in love as they fight against each other. The burgeoning romance brims with eccentricities, but the true fun of Anders' Nebula Award-winning novel is its blend of the fantasy and science fiction genres. Anders reveals an intersection full of possibilities. "Everybody has seen a million spy-with-gadget movies and read a million gritty urban fantasy novels," she said in a 2016 interview. "Which means that you can have a bit of fun playing with the reader's expectations."

—Annabel Gutterman



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Charlie Jane Anders was born in Connecticut in 1969. She studied English and Asian Literature at the University of Cambridge before settling in San Francisco. She co-founded the eclectic indie magazine, *Other*,

with her partner Annalee Newitz that ran from 2002 to 2007. Her first novel, *Choir Boy* (2005) won the Lambda Literary Award for Transgender Literature.

She and Newitz host *Our Opinions Are Correct*, a Hugo award-winning podcast that dives into science fiction books, movies, television and comics. Anders has also emceed *Writers with Drinks*, a spoken word variety show in San Francisco, since 2001. It donates proceeds to the Center for Sex & Culture. Anders has won numerous awards for her books and short stories. Her newest book, *Lessons in Magic and Disaster*, is set to be released in August 2025.



YOUNG ADULT FANTASY

A TORCH AGAINST THE NIGHT

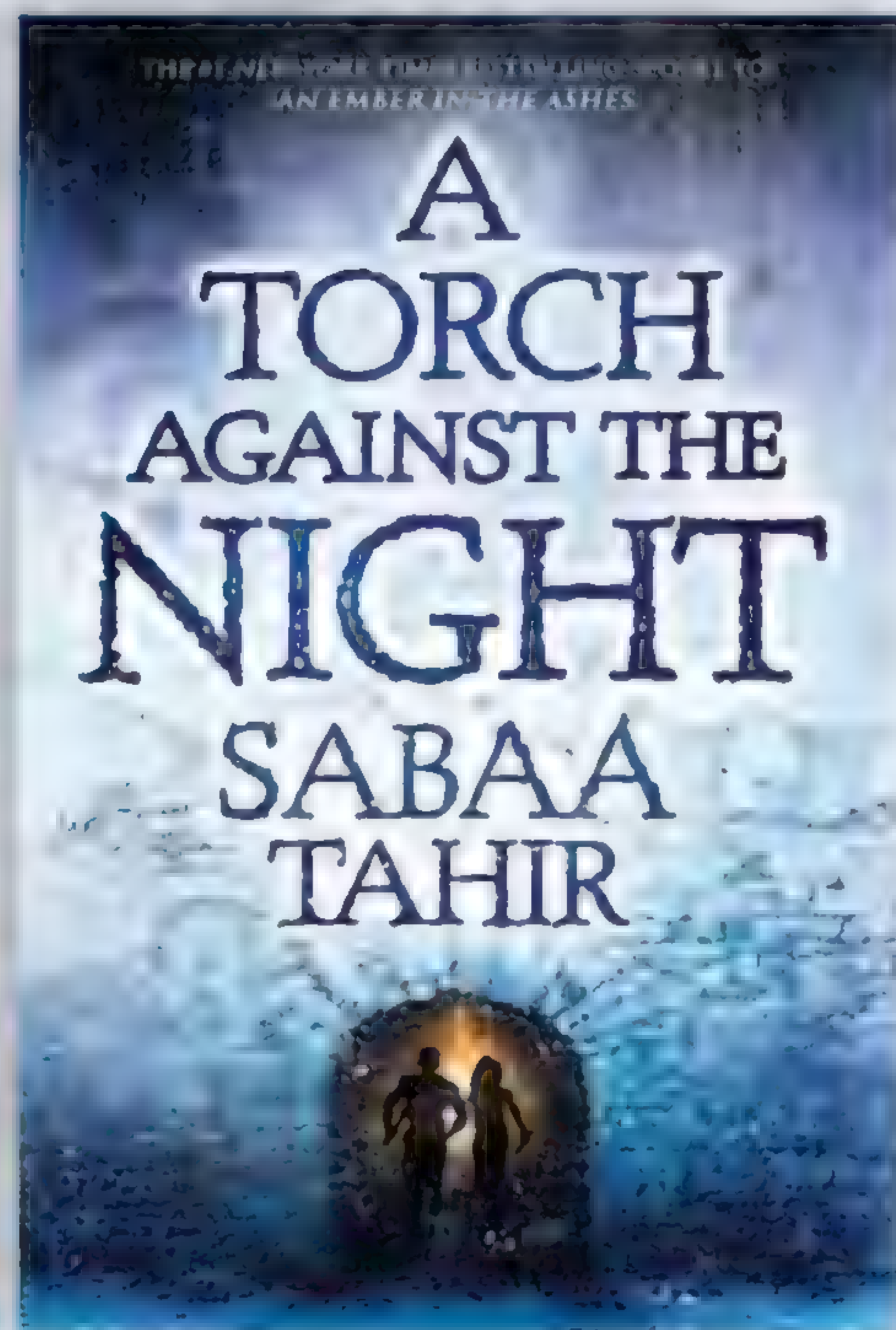
written by **SABAA TAHIR**

The sequel to *An Ember in the Ashes* picks up in the middle of the action: Elias and Laia are on the run, having fled the military academy where they met in order to search for Laia's imprisoned brother. Tahir moves between their voices and introduces a third, Elias' former friend Helene, in this chilling examination of cruelty, perseverance and love. In Helene, Tahir crafts a complex villain whose internal decision-making rings refreshingly real. Like the first book in the series, the second features magic, violence and a meticulous level of world-building, especially in outlining the shifting alliances within the Empire. Tahir amplifies the level of intensity in the sequel, and puts powerful women at the center of the story. As Elias, Laia and Helene's fates become ever more tied, they must

ask themselves just how far they'll go to win in their tortuous game of survival. The final two books of the series are *A Reaper at the Gates* (2018) and *A Sky Beyond the Storm* (2020). —**Annabel Gutterman**

/ OTHER WORKS In addition to the *An Ember in the Ashes* series, Tahir published a contemporary novel, *All My Rage*, in 2022. It explores exactly what the title declares: rage, not only in response to racism but also in response to parents who fail

to show up, the ways in which addiction unravels relationships, and the grief of losing people who matter. "So many of us who feel marginalized, we hold all this anger inside, and we can't express it without potentially serious consequences," Tahir told TIME. Her characters know the feeling well, and the result is a book that brings readers closer than ever to the celebrated author's inner world. "I needed the freedom to draw from my life without telling the story of my life," she said.



HIGH FANTASY

THE WALL OF STORMS

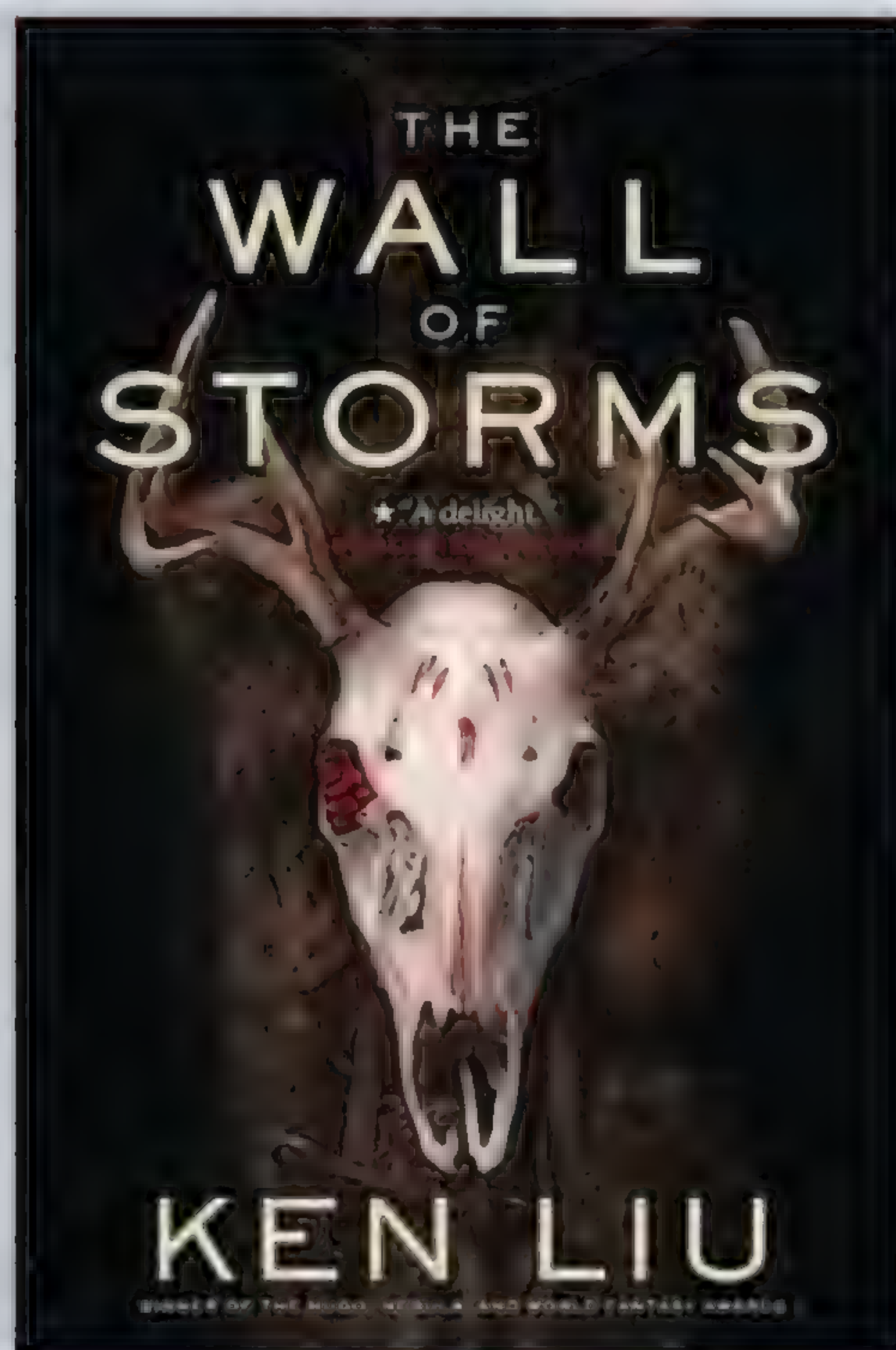
written by **KEN LIU**

Ken Liu, the master translator of *The Three Body Problem* and the brilliant author behind *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories*, continues his “silkpunk” *Dandelion Dynasty* saga with this sequel to *The Grace of Kings*. Set some time after the events of the first book, *The Wall of Storms* begins with the crafty Kuni Garu, now the emperor of the fictional land of Dara and its many islands, facing an unprecedented invasion from a Far East empire. The existential threat comes as both his kingdom and his family face infighting and internal destruction. Through insidious scheming, intense action and heartbreaking tragedy, *The Wall of Storms* maintains the thrilling pace of the series and sets readers up for the third and fourth installments, *The Veiled Throne* and *Speaking Bones*. In the short span of his burgeoning career, Liu has marked himself as one of the most important voices in contemporary genre fiction. His way of weaving identity, history, desire and unbridled creativity into

his stories reinvigorates fantasy storytelling while still honoring everything that came before his work. And through “silkpunk”—a sub-genre of his own creation, which casts East Asian resources into a speculative, “poet-engineer mindset”—Liu continues to create incredibly unique stories, and his *Dandelion Dynasty* is, so far, the greatest distillation of his imagination. —**Peter Allen Clark**

/ **OTHER WORKS** *Pantheon*, a two-season adult animated sci-fi

drama, is based on a series of Liu’s short stories. The show was originally released in 2022 by AMC+. According to the *Hollywood Reporter* review, “Pantheon’s strong sense of compassion for the characters at its core—flesh-and-blood people and digital entities alike—positions it as a counterpoint to the ‘move fast and break things’ approach to technological progress. It’s as concerned with the details of what’s been broken as it is in where all this movement is headed.”



SCIENCE FICTION

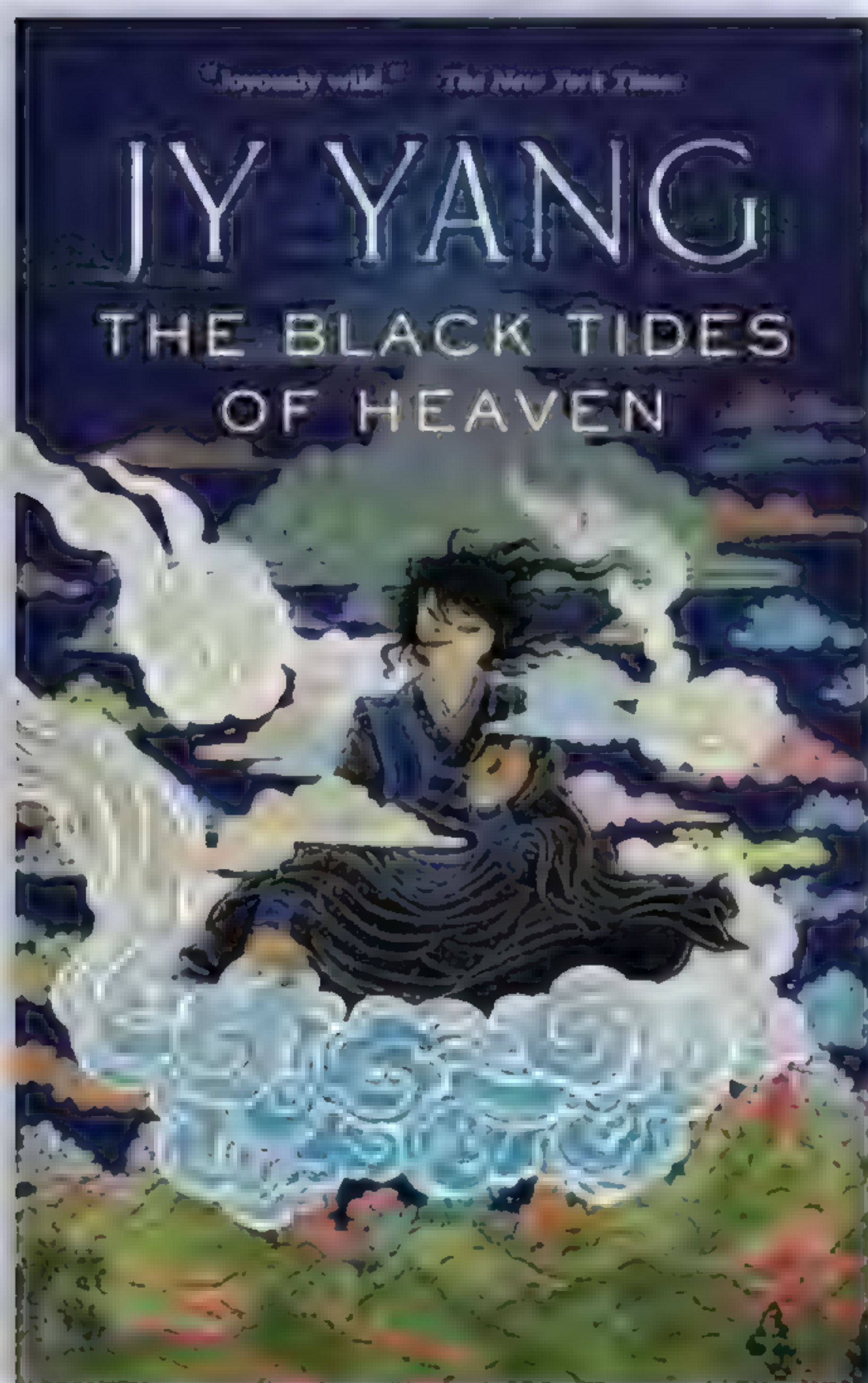
THE BLACK TIDES OF HEAVEN

written by NEON YANG

In author Neon Yang's *The Black Tides of Heaven*, twins Akeha and Mokoya are sent by their mother, the leader of the Protectorate, to be raised in a far-away monastery. Initially inseparable, the twins' paths begin to diverge as they grow into their abilities—both are gifted in the art of Slackcraft, a magic system that allows them to manipulate the natural world—and their individual identities. (In the world

of the Protectorate, it is customary for children to choose their gender before becoming adults—but the certainty with which Mokoya makes her choice takes Akeha, who will choose to be male, by surprise.) The Hugo and Nebula-nominated novella has all the weight of an epic without the page count, but it's worth noting that it's not the only entry point into Yang's richly-envisioned *Tensorate* series: Its twin, *The Red Threads of Fortune*, was published on the same day in 2017, and the duo can be read in any order.
—Cate Matthews

/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Neon Yang was born in Singapore and was a molecular biologist, a comics and animation writer, and a journalist before becoming a novelist. They are based in the U.K. and have a master's in creative writing from the University of East Anglia in Norwich. Their four-novella *Tensorate* series, beginning with *The Black Tides of Heaven* and *The Red Threads of Fortune*, was followed by *The Descent of Monsters* (2018) and *The Ascent to Godhood* (2019). Their first full-length novel, *The Genesis of Misery* (2022), was a 2023 finalist for the Locus Award for Best New Novel. *Publisher's Weekly* described it as, "lush and gripping throughout, and they accomplish the tall order of seamlessly weaving world-building into the dynamic motion of the story, incorporating fascinating details without ever risking expository fatigue."



SCIENCE FICTION

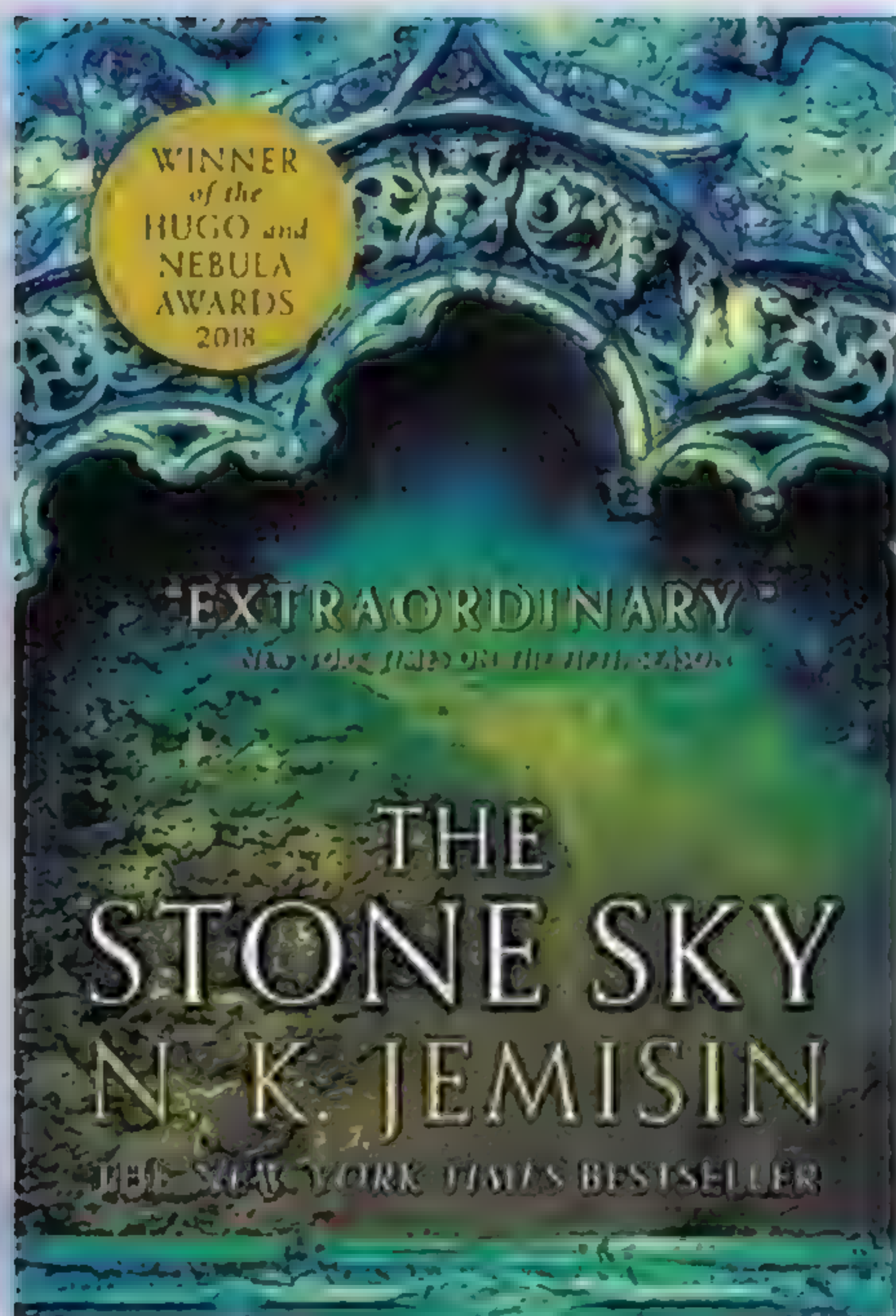
THE STONE SKY

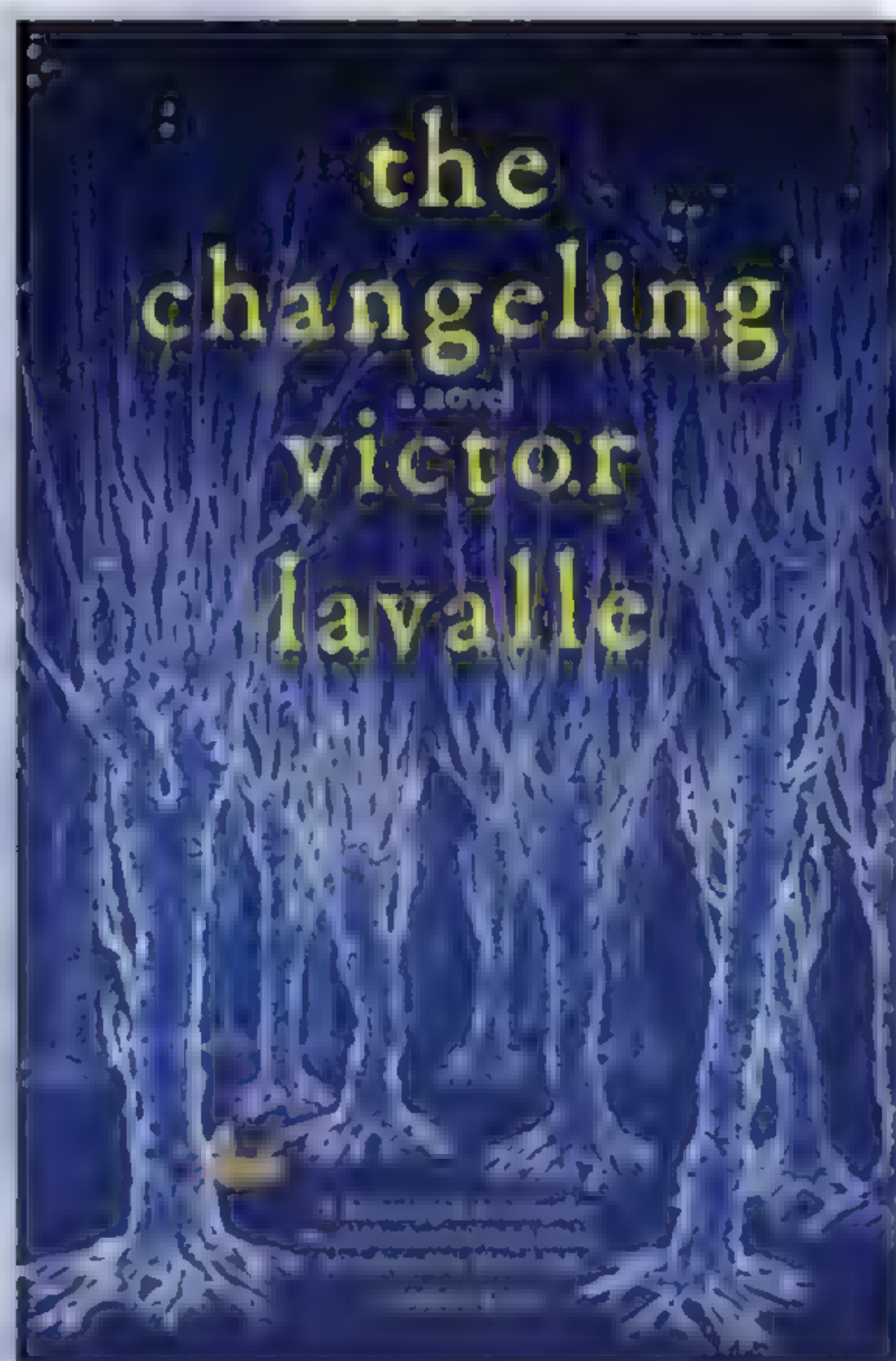
written by **N.K. JEMISIN**

In *The Stone Sky*, the final installment of her *Broken Earth* series, N.K. Jemisin digs even further into the foundations of the trilogy's catastrophe-stricken world, and excavates the origins of its fault lines. The critically lauded book—in which characters

grapple with, among other issues, the question of whether it is just to prevent worlds built on structural oppression from toppling—made Jemisin the first writer ever to win three consecutive Hugo Awards for Best Novel. In Jemisin's acceptance speech for the prestigious award, she described science fiction and fantasy as “the aspirational drive of the zeitgeist,” a mission statement of sorts for both the genre and for one of the most respected authors working within it. With the *Broken Earth* trilogy—and the attention it brought to her work more broadly—Jemisin has continued to push forward the genre and publishing as a whole. —**Cate Matthews**

/ **RECEPTION** In addition to the Hugo Award, *The Stone Sky* won a Locus Award and a Nebula Award. Jemisin received a MacArthur Genius Grant in 2020 and was included on the 2021 TIME100, an annual list of the most influential people in the world. Stacey Abrams, the founder of Fair Fight Action and a former Democratic minority leader for the Georgia House of Representatives, wrote the TIME100 tribute for Jemisin, saying, “World-building is the core of extraordinary science fiction—the ability to craft the contours, substance and heft of whole societies. What N.K. Jemisin accomplishes in each of her works defies the standard ‘us vs. them’ narrative and instead dares readers to bring their lived experiences into the space she has imagined.” In 2021, Sony's TriStar Pictures paid seven figures for the rights for the *Broken Earth* series, with plans for Jemisin to write the screenplays.





HORROR

THE CHANGELING

written by **VICTOR LAVALLE**

Over his two-decade career, Victor LaValle has excelled in writing stories that meld modern realities with fantastical elements. *The Changeling*, published in 2017 and set in present-day New York City, exemplifies his unique approach. It follows Apollo, a new father who deals with racial profiling and professional tedium. But after Apollo's wife viciously attacks him and their baby boy and disappears, the city turns into a whirlwind of demon giants and glowing witches—and Apollo must prove himself in a series of Olympian challenges. There are few authors who could convincingly render both New York subway showtime dancers and glowing witches, much less fold them into the same story, but LaValle does so with seamless grace in his update on the classic changeling myth.

—**Andrew R. Chow**

/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Victor LaValle was born and raised in New York City. He went to Cornell University and is a professor at Columbia University School of the Arts. *The Changeling* won a Dragon Award, a British Fantasy Award, a Locus Award, and a World Fantasy Award.

URBAN FANTASY

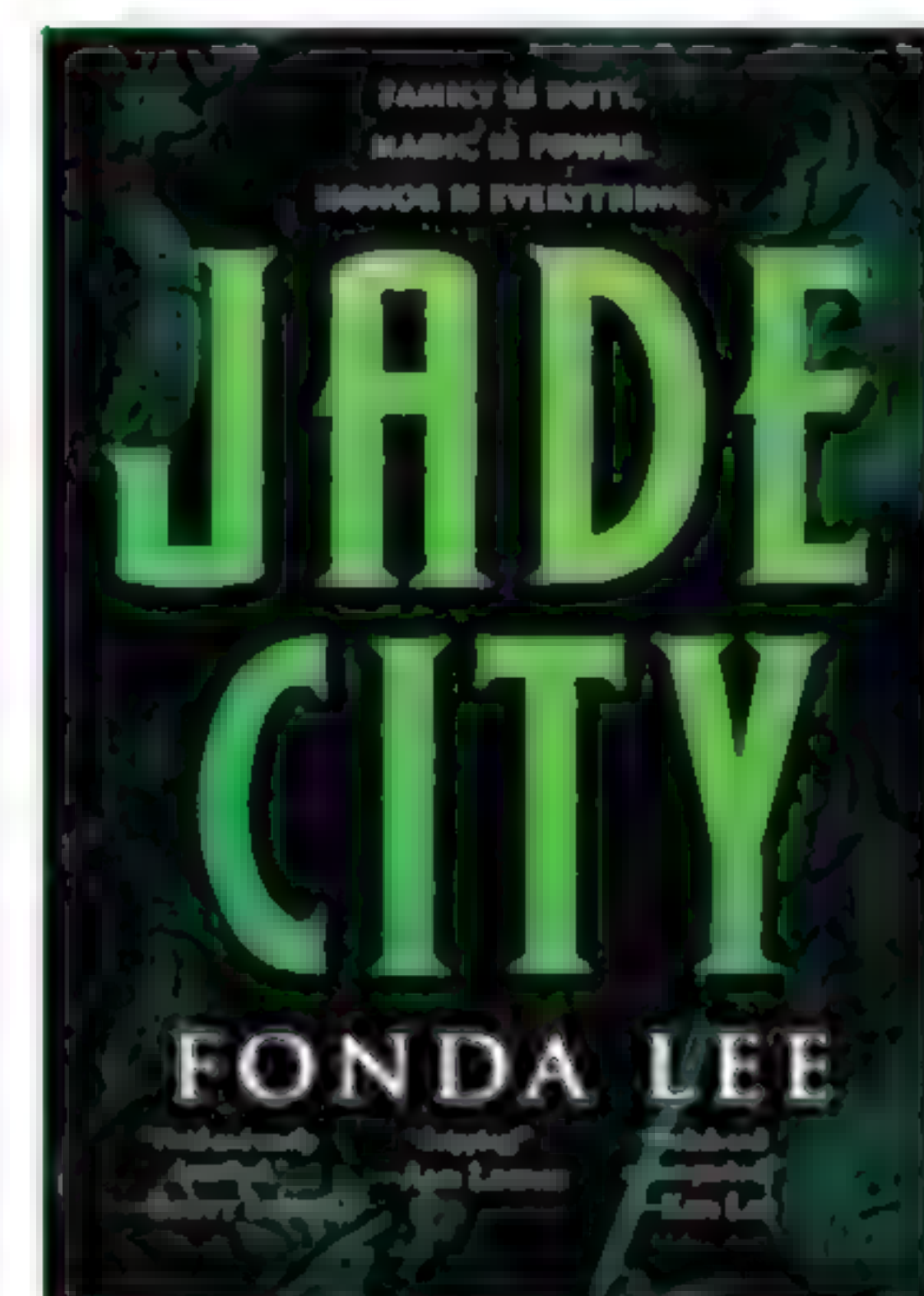
JADE CITY

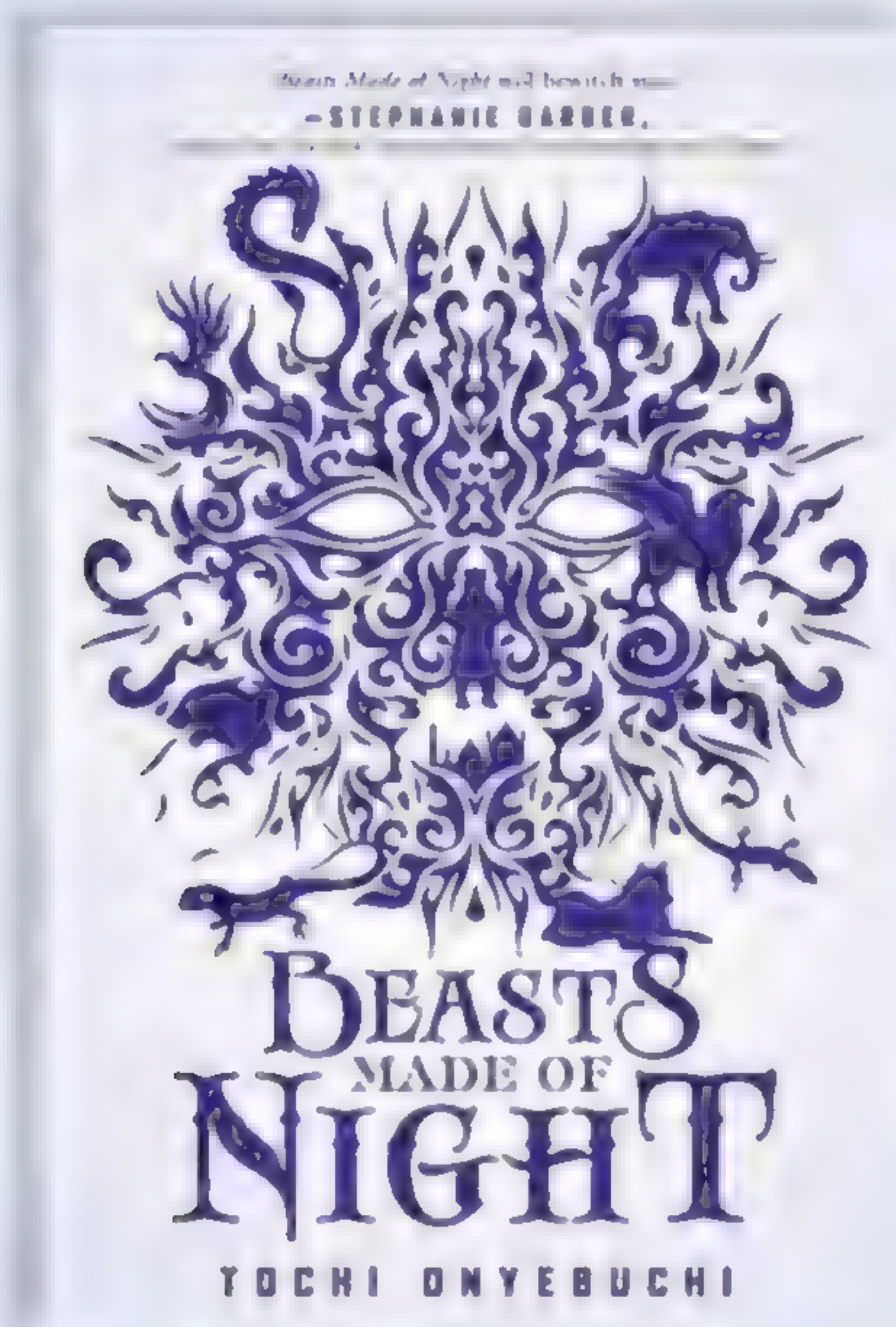
written by **FONDA LEE**

On the island of Kekon, jade is everything. But it's no normal mineral—this jade enhances the superhuman abilities of the Green Bone warriors who have long protected the island from invaders. The jade market is controlled by two clans who exist peacefully until a shake-up in the leadership of one leads to an aggressive campaign for control by the other. Violence erupts and a clan war follows, coalescing into a saga that is part fantasy, part mob thriller. Beyond the thoughtful intricacies of the geopolitics surrounding jade and its powers, Fonda Lee creates a world so layered and deep in history and ritual, it's easy to forget that it doesn't exist in our reality. With its seamless mixture of styles, *Jade City* becomes an essential text in the crime fantasy genre.

—**Annabel Gutterman**

/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Fonda Lee was born in Calgary, Alberta, Canada in 1979 and educated at Stanford University, where she earned a MBA. She worked as a corporate strategist before becoming a full-time writer. *Jade City* is the first of *The Green Bone Saga* series, which also includes *Jade War* (2019) and *Jade Legacy* (2021).





DARK FANTASY

BEASTS MADE OF NIGHT

written by **TOCHI ONYEBUCHI**

Sin springs to life in the form of literal monsters in Tochi Onyebuchi's 2017 novel, which is inspired by folklore from his Nigerian heritage. In the oligarchical city of Kos—modeled on the Nigerian city of Lagos—nobles are spared from owning up to their sins by hiring warriors to kill the monstrous physical manifestations of their wrongdoings. The novel follows Taj, a teenager who is so skilled at killing these monsters that he becomes entangled in the mindgames of the palace's upper echelons. With plenty of fearsome fight scenes, the novel also offers a searing look at elitism and power structures—and this balancing act of thrill and inquiry promises to make Onyebuchi a power player in the YA world in the years to come.

—Andrew R. Chow

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Tochi Onyebuchi was born in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1987. He is a graduate of Yale University and Columbia Law School and became a full-time writer in 2019. *Beasts Made of Night* was his first novel and won the 2018 Nommo Award.

HISTORICAL FANTASY

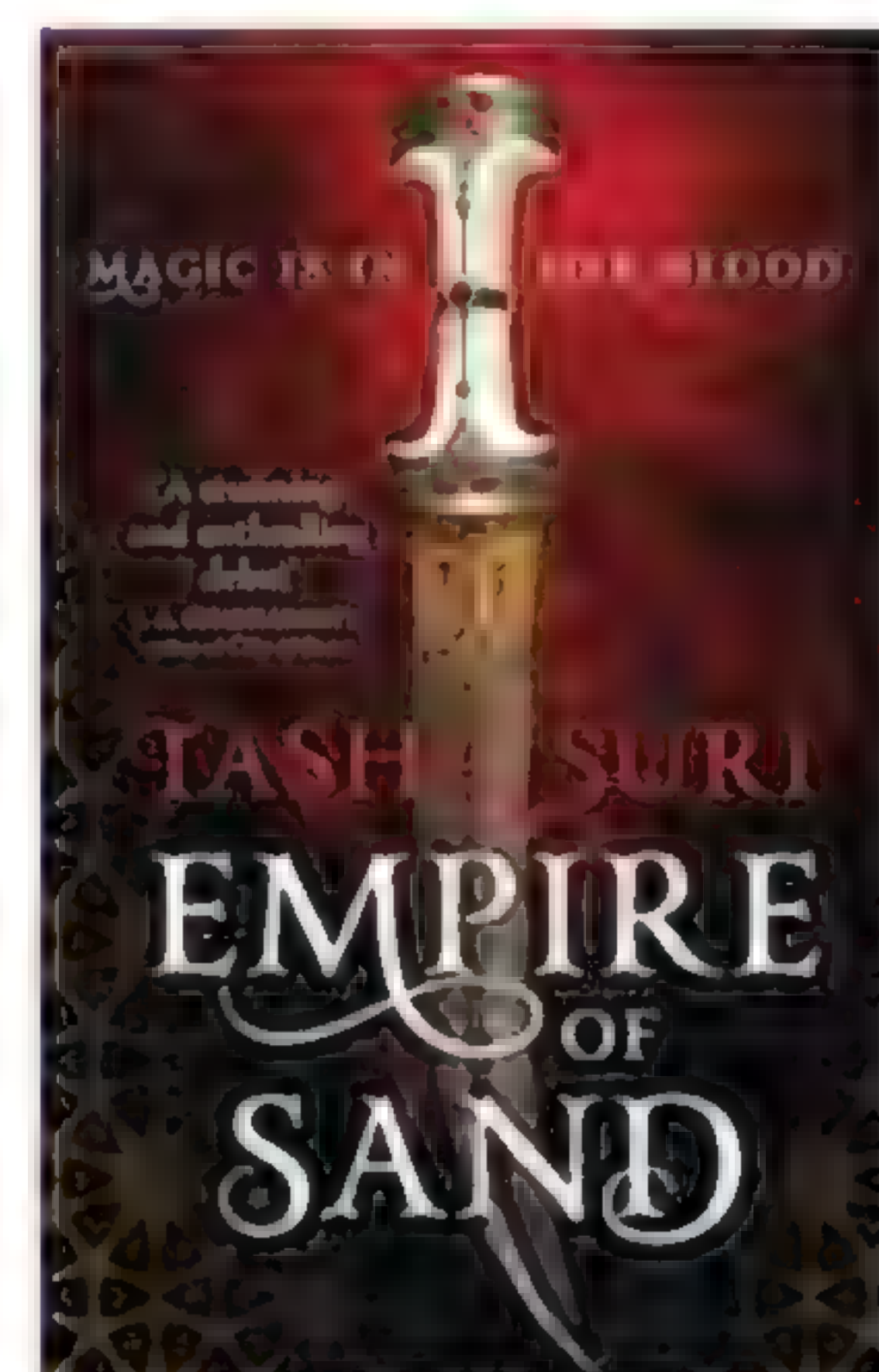
EMPIRE OF SAND

written by **TASHA SURI**

Empire of Sand, the first in the *Books of Ambha* series by Tasha Suri, opens up a rich new world in which magical power is concentrated in one's blood, heritage and class are carefully monitored, and a young woman named Mehr is caught between the worlds of her father, an imperial governor, and her absent mother, a magic-wielding nomad. In a landscape redolent of desert kingdoms of lore, rife with mystical sandstorms, spirit-beings and superstition, Suri kicks off an adventure bent on keeping Mehr's identity—and potential—a secret from those who wish her harm: namely, the Emperor himself. Mehr's underdog story will feel familiar, but her unique powers and Suri's creative world-building heighten the stakes.

—Raisa Bruner

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR British-born novelist Tasha Suri was an academic librarian before she became a full-time writer. She lives in London in a house she describes as “mildly haunted.” Suri's *Realm of Ash*, published in 2019, completes the *Books of Ambha* two-book series.

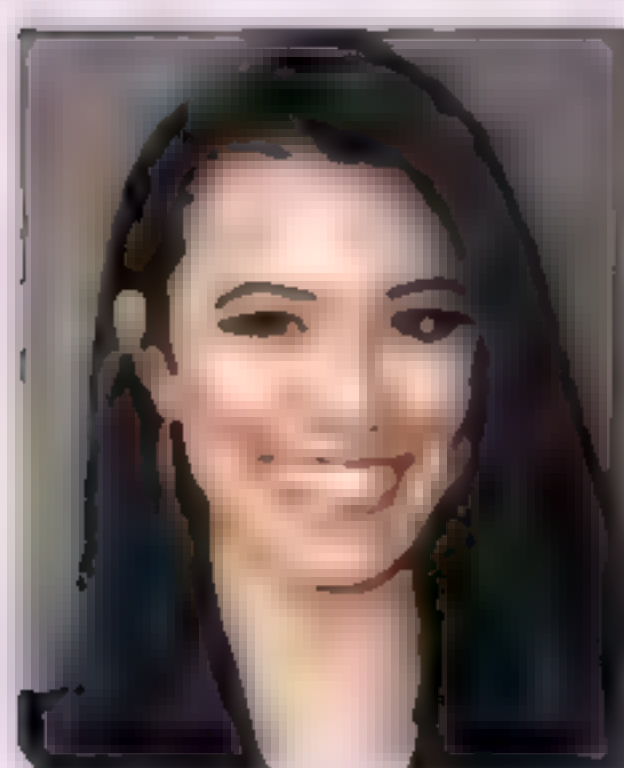


PARANORMAL FICTION

ARU SHAH AND THE END OF TIME

written by **ROSHANI CHOKSHI**

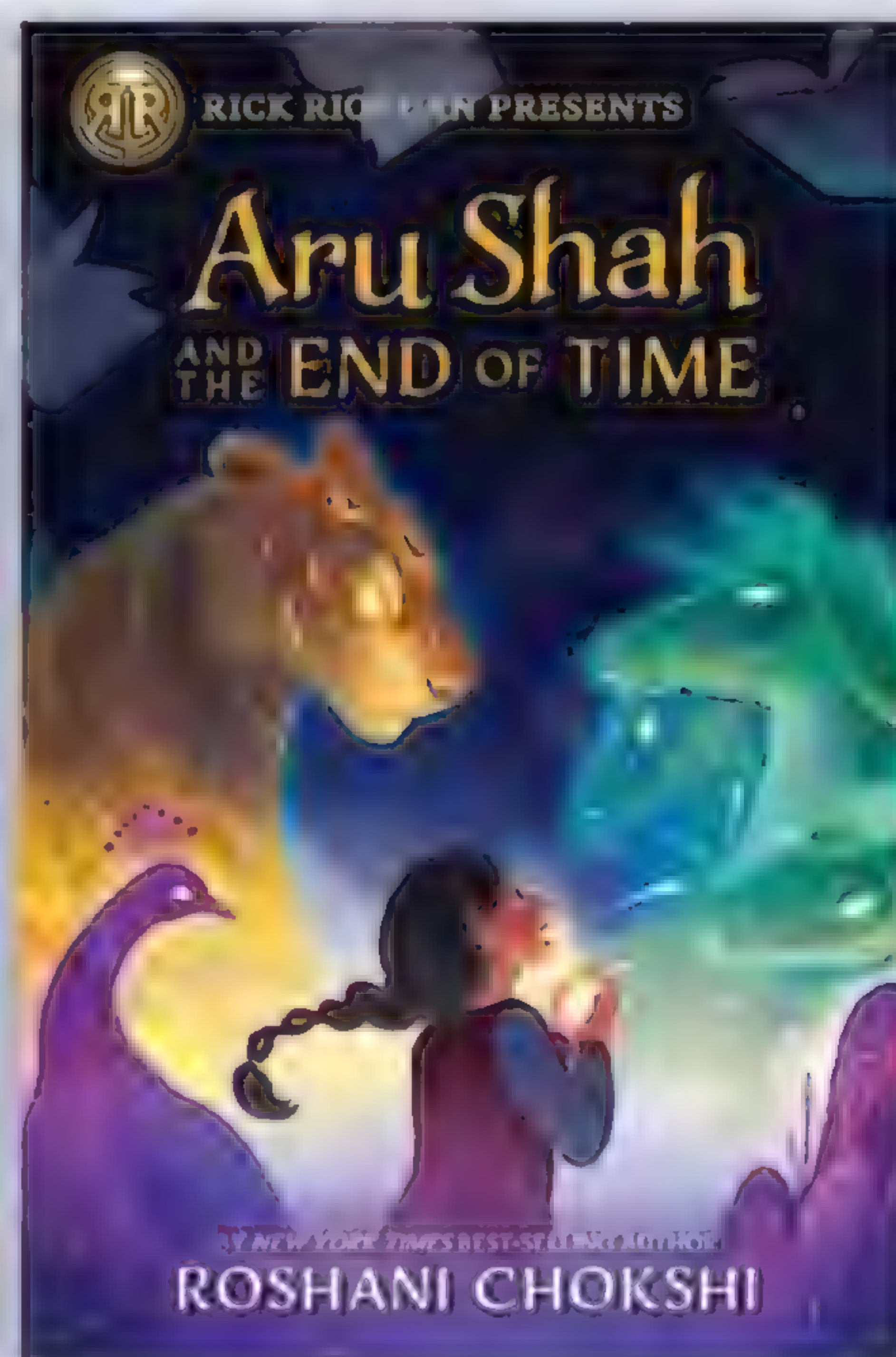
In an effort to better fit in at her school, 12-year-old Aru Shah bends the truth—a lot. Her mother works at the Museum of Ancient Indian Art and Culture, which is where Aru’s lies catch up with her: she tells her classmates that there’s a curse on the museum’s Lamp of Bharata. When they ask her to prove it, she lights the lamp—and accidentally awakens an ancient demon who has the ability to end the world. Aru discovers that to make things right, she’ll have to track down the reincarnations of the Pandava brothers, the central characters in the Hindu epic poem Mahabharata. In her middle grade debut, Roshani Chokshi creates an exciting adventure, interweaving Hindu mythology with her snappy prose. And in Aru, Chokshi unveils an astute young heroine with witty observations about a world she is just coming to understand. —*Annabel Gutterman*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Locus Award-winning young adult author Roshani Chokshi was born in 1991 in St. Louis, Missouri, to a Filipino mother and an Indian father. She was raised as a Hindu, which she often draws on for her stories.

Chokshi went to law school at the University of Georgia but left to pursue her writing career after her first published novel, *The Star-Touched Queen* (2016), made *The New York Times* bestseller list. *Aru Shah and the End of Time* is the first of her *Pandava Quintet* series. Chokshi was named the 2020 Georgia author

of the year for her second novel in the *Pandava* series, *Aru Shah and the Song of Death* (2019). The other titles include *Aru Shah and the Tree of Wishes* (2020), *Aru Shah and the City of Gold* (2021) and *Aru Shah and the Nectar of Immortality* (2022). Her first adult novel, *The Last Tale of The Flower Bride* (2023), was a No. 1 *Sunday Times* bestseller.



FOLKTALE

BLANCA & ROJA

written by ANNA-MARIE MCLEMORE

In this innovative retelling of *Swan Lake*, teenage sisters Blanca and Roja know that only one of them, the “good” one, is destined to live her full life as a human. The other, due to a curse on their family, will be turned into a swan. The girls never see each other as competition, and when it appears that their time together as humans is coming to an end, they decide

they’ll do whatever it takes to outsmart the curse.

“Swan Lake is a deeply moving love story, but if its messages about womanhood go unquestioned, they reinforce the idea that we can be reduced down to basic types,” Anna-Marie McLemore said in a 2019 interview. Instead of giving into the original tale’s tropes—the love story here is clearly between the sisters—McLemore demonstrates just how tiresome it is to be “good,” and yet how heartbreaking it is to be seen as anything else. —*Annabel Gutterman*

/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Anna-Marie McLemore is a Mexican-American writer. When asked by *Bustle* when they realized they were a voice of the Latinx community, they said, “Honestly, when I realized that readers were picking up my books because they were about Latinx characters, not in spite of that. Feeling like I could be a voice for the Latinx community only happened when I stopped apologizing for being Latina and writing Latinx characters.” McLemore believes transgender characters, queer characters and characters of color deserve fairy tales. *School Library Journal* named *Blanca & Roja* a best book of 2018, saying, “The expansive, magical tone of McLemore’s writing leaves readers enchanted by the power of love, stories, and sisterhood.”



HISTORICAL FANTASY

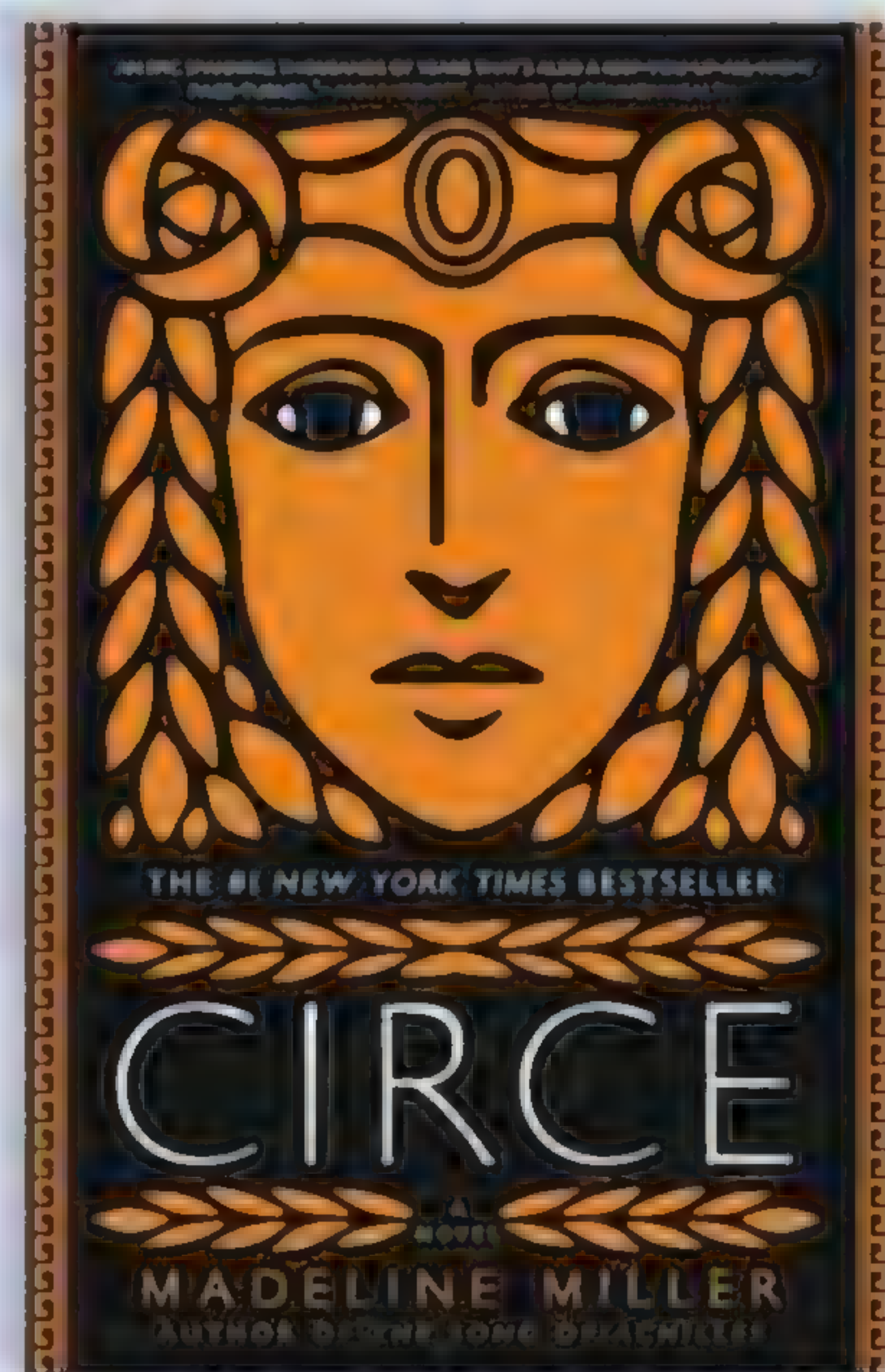
CIRCE

written by **MADELINE MILLER**

As the unwanted daughter of the titan sun god Helios and beautiful but cold nymph Perse, Circe is no stranger to cruelty or loneliness. But it's not until she's banished for all eternity to the remote island of Aiaia that she must learn to carve out a life for herself, relying only on her unique talent for witchcraft. In her sophomore novel, an international bestseller, Madeline Miller offers a fresh take on the sorceress known for turning men into pigs in Homer's *Odyssey* that lends multitudes to *Circe*, something not generally afforded to women of Greek mythology. Over the course of thousands of years, Circe evolves from a young naïf who takes pity on the eternally doomed Prometheus to a jealous lover who turns a fellow nymph into a horrible sea monster to a formidable, yet compassionate, goddess of magic who must choose, once and for all: the immortal life she was born into, or humanity. —*Megan McCluskey*

/ **RECEPTION** *Circe* was a No. 1 *New York Times* bestseller, a No. 1 Indie Bestseller, was shortlisted for the Orange Prize, and received starred reviews from *Library Journal* and *Publisher's Weekly*, who wrote, "Weaving together Homer's tale with other sources, Miller crafts a classic story of female empowerment. She paints an uncompromising portrait of a superheroine who learns to wield divine power while coming to understand what it means to be mortal."

In its starred review, Kirkus Reviews said, "Expect Miller's readership to mushroom like one of Circe's spells. Miller makes Homer pertinent to women facing 21st-century monsters." In 2019, HBO Max bought the rights to make *Circe* into an eight-episode series with Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver, the team behind *Jurassic World*, *Mulan* and the *Avatar* sequels, as screenwriters. Miller's fans were elated, but no more updates about the show have been released—keep your fingers crossed.



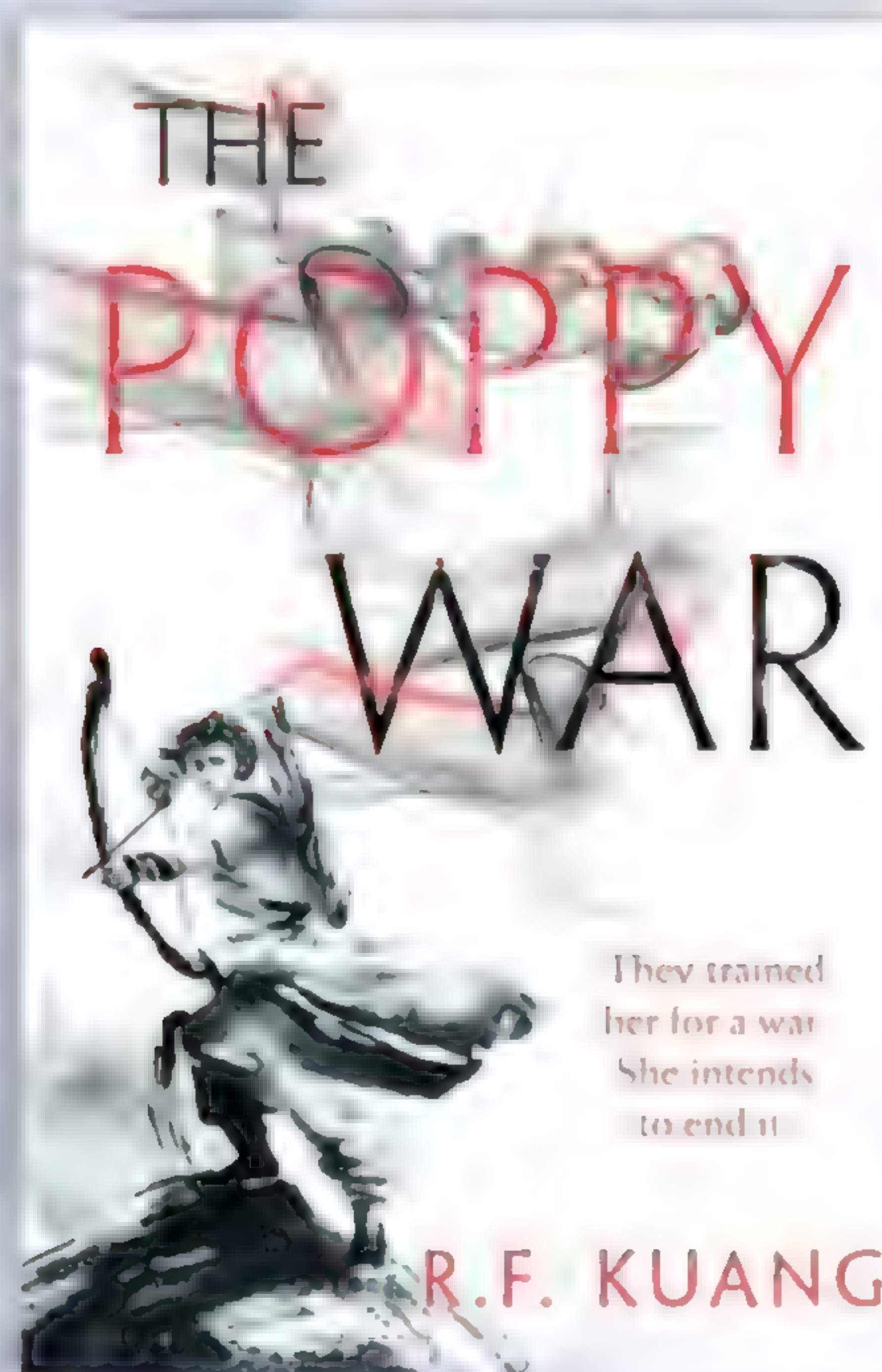
HIGH FANTASY

THE POPPY WAR

written by **R.F. KUANG**

R.F. Kuang's 2018 debut, a military fantasy that upends a familiar school narrative with blood, terror and drugs that give her protagonist god-like abilities, is at times unflinchingly dark—though no more so than the events that inspired it. Kuang, has two post-graduate degrees in Chinese studies, threads her knowledge of the region's history, including the Second Sino-Japanese War, throughout the fictional Nikara Empire. There, Rin, an orphan escaping an arranged marriage, earns a spot at an elite military academy where she and her peers prepare to defend Nikara, should they ever be called upon. That day comes before they can graduate, leaving chaos and rubble in its wake and setting Rin and her newly unleashed shamanic powers on a path toward further destruction. Despite the book's supernatural elements, Kuang's powerful depictions of trauma and the horrors of war feel real.

—Cate Matthews



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rebecca F. Kuang was born in Guangzhou, China, in

1996, and moved to the U.S. when she was 4 years old. She grew up in Dallas. Her parents were avid readers and introduced her to the English classics at a young age. Kuang became such a voracious reader of sci-fi and fantasy books that her mother was concerned that she wasn't doing her schoolwork. He was forbidden to check more books out of the library and had to smuggle them into the house. Kuang has several degrees from prestigious universities and is currently

earning her Ph.D. in East Asian languages and literature at Yale. Her academic studies inform her writing. Of *The Poppy War*, which she sold on her 20th birthday, Kuang told NPR, "I was writing from a place of rage and anger because I thought it was just astonishing and really tragic that something like this was not really talked about in the West and also not really ... acknowledged or apologized for, on the part of Japan." Kuang was named on the 2023 TIME100 Next list, which recognizes rising leaders in health, climate, business, sports, the arts and more. Her other novels in *The Poppy War* series, *The Dragon Republic* (2019) and *The Burning God* (2020), also received rave reviews.

URBAN FANTASY

TRAIL OF LIGHTNING

written by **REBECCA ROANHORSE**

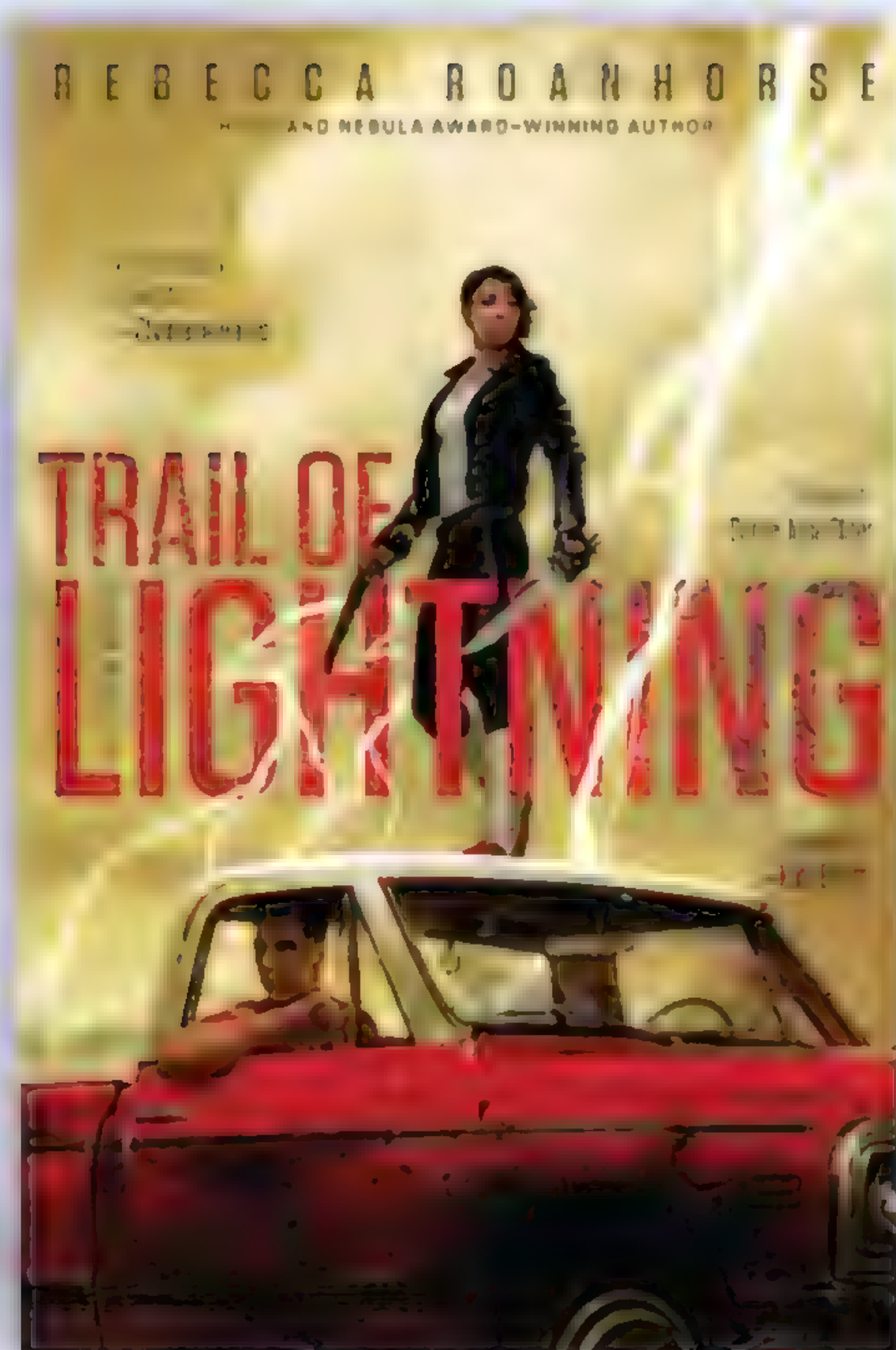
In her buzzy 2018 novel, *Trail of Lightning*, Hugo and Nebula award-winning author Rebecca Roanhorse deftly adds new layers to post-apocalyptic tropes. The first time that monster hunter Maggie Hoskie sees the Wall—the structure that protects the Diné, or the Navajo people, from the disasters that have transformed the rest of the world—she is surprised by its beauty. But then again, the character reflects, it's no wonder that the Wall's aesthetics do not suggest

the apocalypse: “the Diné had already suffered their apocalypse over a century before. This wasn't our end. This was our rebirth.” Roanhorse, who is of both Indigenous and African-American descent, is known for centering characters of color in speculative settings. In *Trail of Lightning*, Maggie and her ally Kai wield fantastic abilities called “clan powers” that allow them to battle monsters and contend with gods. For both characters, the powers were awakened in moments of trauma—another trope that takes on renewed resonance in Roanhorse's thoughtfully constructed world. —**Cate Matthews**



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Rebecca Roanhorse was born in Arkansas and grew up in Fort Worth, Texas. Roanhorse, who is Ohkay Owingeh and Black, was adopted as a baby by a white couple and felt limited and “othered” growing up in

Fort Worth—she escaped by reading fantasy novels. She graduated from Yale University and Union Theological Seminary and worked as a computer programmer in New York City before she had a disastrous reunion with her Ohkay Owingeh birth mother. Roanhorse learned she was born in secret and was fathered by a local minister. The experience inspired her to move to New Mexico and get her JD from the University of New Mexico School of Law, where she specialized in Federal Indian law. She and her Navajo husband lived on the Navajo Nation and she worked as a clerk for the Navajo Supreme Court. Although Roanhorse has her share of critics, specifically Native people who believe she has no right to tell their stories, she continues to write. “Navajo kids read Percy Jackson in their classrooms, which is fun,” she she told *Vulture* in 2020. “But what if there was a chance for them to read a contemporary action-adventure story featuring indigenous pantheons instead of Greek and Roman gods. Isn't that powerful? Isn't that affirming? Why wouldn't we want that?”



SCIENCE FICTION

WITCHMARK

written by C.L. POLK

In a world similar to Edwardian England, noble families use magical powers to advance their political agendas. Miles Singer was born a healer, and to avoid becoming enslaved by his family, who would take advantage of his supernatural gift, he runs away. While working in a veterans' hospital under a new identity, Miles hides his past and his powers. But one day, a poisoned witch is brought into his clinic, and Miles becomes involved in a murder mystery more

complicated than anything he could have imagined. As Miles risks it all to uncover what happened to his patient, C.L. Polk reveals the intricate ways in which magic divides the society she creates. In revealing the complex social and political hierarchies within *Witchmark*, which won the 2019 World Fantasy Award for Best Novel, Polk pushes the boundaries of what period fantasy can achieve. —*Annabel Gutterman*

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Canadian author Chelsea Louise Polk was born in New Westminster, British Columbia, in 1969. They were a voracious reader as a child—their mother gave them a Stephen King novel when they were just 13—and they enjoyed writing stories but never thought it was a career path. Polk didn't take writing seriously until their 30s, when they began publishing short stories. Polk, who is open about their struggles with anxiety, had many starts and stops along their writing career because they feared criticism. After *Witchmark*, Polk's debut novel, was published when they were nearly 50, their career took off.

/ OTHER WORKS *Witchmark* is the first in the *Kingston Cycle* series, followed by *Stormsong* (2020) and *Soulstar* (2021). The series was shortlisted for the 2021 Hugo Award. Polk's other works include *The Midnight Bargain* (2020) and the novella *Even Though I Knew the End* (2022) which won a Nebula Award and was shortlisted for a Hugo and a World Fantasy Award.



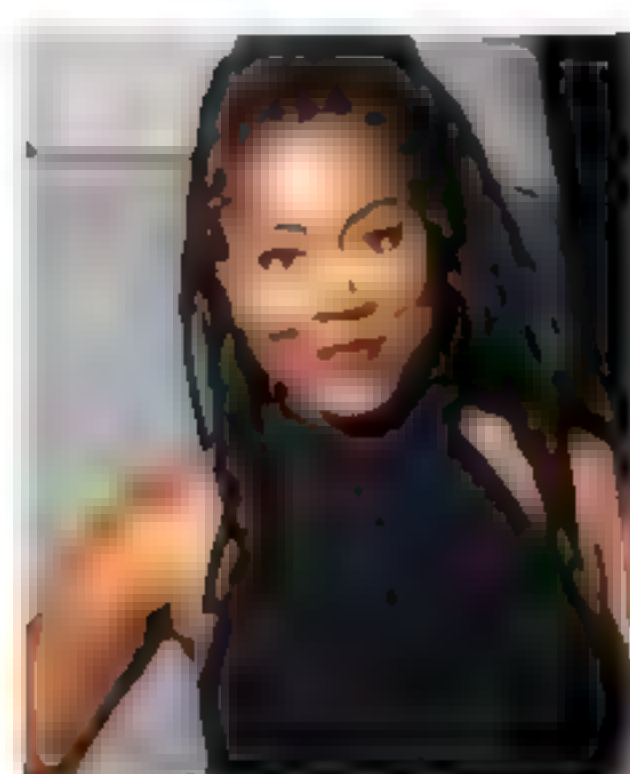
YOUNG ADULT FANTASY

CHILDREN OF BLOOD AND BONE

written by **TOMI ADEYEMI**

This West African-inspired epic appeared on virtually every best-of list when it debuted in 2018, and for good reason: beyond its impressive scope, the book kicks off a series that uses fantasy as a means to dissect systemic racism and oppression. Readers are introduced to the kingdom of Orisha, where years ago, the magic-wielding maji people were wiped out in an effort by the cruel king to gain more power. But teenager Zélie Adebola is on a mission to bring the magic back, and her reason is personal: her maji mother fell victim to the merciless monarch's killing spree. Tomi Adeyemi wanted the sweeping saga, which was on the bestseller list for 122 weeks, to be an allegory for the contemporary Black experience—and it proves particularly powerful in pursuing that mission.

—Annabel Gutterman



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tomi Adeyemi was born in 1993 to parents who emigrated from Nigeria. She grew up

in Chicago. After she graduated from Harvard University with a degree in English literature, she studied West African mythology and culture. At 24, she sold the *Legacy of Orisha* trilogy for a near-record sum, and she sold the film rights to *Children of Blood and Bone* before the book even came out. Paramount Pictures acquired those rights in 2022 and announced that Adeyemi will adapt, write the script, and serve as executive producer. Adeyemi was on the 2020 TIME100 list, a list of the most influential people in the world.

YOUNG ADULT FANTASY

CHILDREN OF VIRTUE AND VENGEANCE

written by **TOMI ADEYEMI**

The second installment of Tomi Adeyemi's young-adult trilogy, *Legacy of Orisha*, finds its fierce protagonist Zélie Adebola facing unexpected consequences from her success in restoring the magic to her kingdom. Though the maji—the oppressed white-haired people whose powers were stripped when the evil king wiped out magic—now have their abilities back, the monarchy has them, too. In Adeyemi's absorbing and elaborately constructed novel, the two sides engage in a bitter civil war over control of Orisha. As the kingdom begins to self-destruct, Zélie must fight to save it. Like its predecessor, *Children of Virtue and Vengeance* is fast-paced and unafraid to ask tough questions about the cyclical nature of oppression and the systems that enforce it. —Annabel Gutterman

/ OTHER WORKS The third novel in the trilogy, *Children of Anguish and Anarchy*, was published in 2024 and also topped the *New York Times* bestseller list.



HISTORICAL FANTASY

SONG OF BLOOD & STONE

written by L. PENELOPE

For centuries, a magical veil has separated the lands of Elsira and Lagrimar, allowing the two kingdoms to exist in peace. Jasmina lives in isolation on the border but technically resides in Elsira, where she's an outcast due to her healing gift of Earthsong. When a group of soldiers from Lagrimar end up in her valley, unaware they've left their kingdom, everything changes for Jasmina. They've got a captive named Jack, an Elsiran spy, who tells Jasmina that there are cracks in the veil, putting the control of Elsira at stake. Together, they embark on an engrossing and dangerous quest to save society—and develop feelings for each other along the way. The romance is fresh and fun to read, and Penelope's world-building is a feat to watch develop throughout the book, particularly in her evocative descriptions of Jasmina's powers. "By itself, her Song was nothing but raw potential, a match waiting for a strike," Penelope writes. "But when the rush of

Earthsong swept over her, the match caught fire, burning bright."
—Annabel Gutterman

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Leslye Penelope was born in the Bronx and moved around as a child before setting in Maryland. She is a graduate of Howard University, where she studied film and computer science, and went to grad school at Cal State East Bay where she studied multimedia. She hosts a podcast, *My Imaginary Friends*, which gives a behind-the-scenes look at what it's like to be a working author. *Song of Blood and Stone*, the first

in her *Earthsinger Chronicles* series, was originally self-published until it was discovered and picked up by St. Martin's Press. "I think when you're just reading a contemporary story you can get a lot from it, but when you have the speculative elements, and you're in either another world or you're adding magical or speculative elements to our world, you can talk about things in a way that's a little more removed. You're holding up a mirror to our world, but it's not exactly ours, so all of the same baggage does not apply," she told *Locus* magazine in 2022.



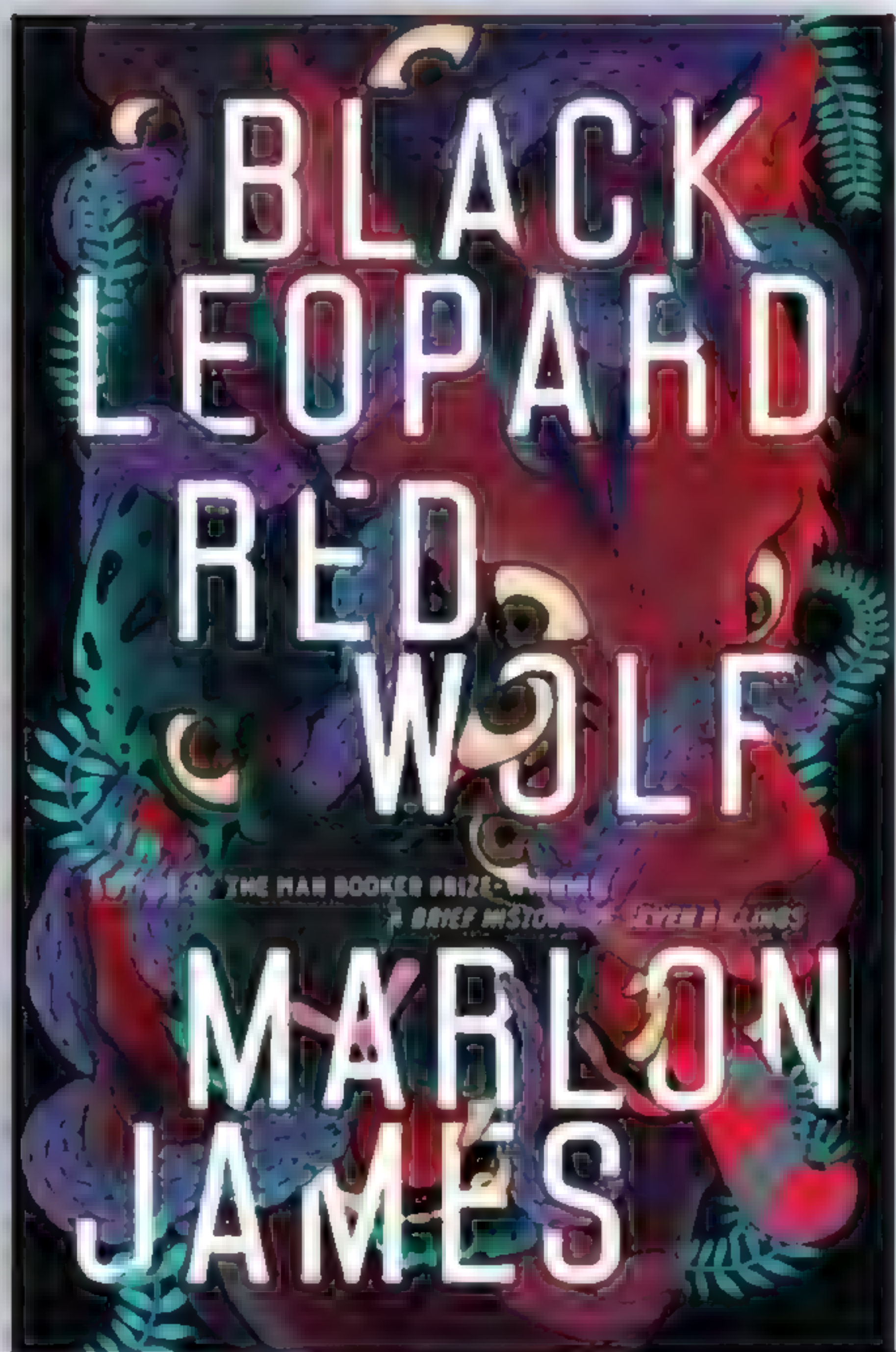
DARK FANTASY

BLACK LEOPARD, RED WOLF

written by MARLON JAMES

The fantasy genre has long been saturated with the myths of Europe. Marlon James' fourth novel offers a stunning corrective, drawing instead on African mythology and history for its tropes, character types and narrative renderings. James, who won the 2015 Man Booker Prize for *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, identifies as a gay man, and—in another welcome palliative to an often-heteronormative genre—he fills

Black Leopard, Red Wolf with characters who span the full spectra of gender and sexual identities and who never once feel anything close to stereotypes. The novel is breathtakingly ambitious. It's meant to be the first in a trilogy that will retell the same story of a missing boy and the fantastical crew sent to retrieve him from three different perspectives. James crafts a sprawling story of heroism, evil, betrayal and redemption with electric language, all while matching up with the classics of the genre when it comes to grand world-building and intricately designed magical elements that feel entirely of its universe. —*Elijah Wolfson*



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Marlon James grew up in a suburb of Kingston, Jamaica, the son of a police inspector mother and a police-officer-turned-lawyer father. Both of his parents encouraged him to read, and growing up, he

rewrote the ends of *The Incredible Hulk* episodes so Bruce Banner could finally catch a break. He studied literature at the University of the West Indies and worked as a graphic designer, among other jobs. Before his writing career took off, he threw himself into evangelical Christianity in order to bury a secret: he was gay in a country that was—and despite improvements, still is—plagued with homophobia. At 31, James read Toni Morrison's *Sula*, and he found validation he never felt at church. *Sula*, on her deathbed, was asked whether she had anything to show for her life's choices. Her reply was unrepentant: "Show? To who?" It took James over a decade, but in 2015, he came out in an essay he wrote for the *New York Times*. "It just hit me: There's nothing about what I want to do in life that I have to get permission for. When it comes to being who I am, I don't have an allegiance or a duty to anybody," he told *TIME* in 2019. James was on the 2019 *TIME*100, a list of the most influential people in the world.

HIGH FANTASY

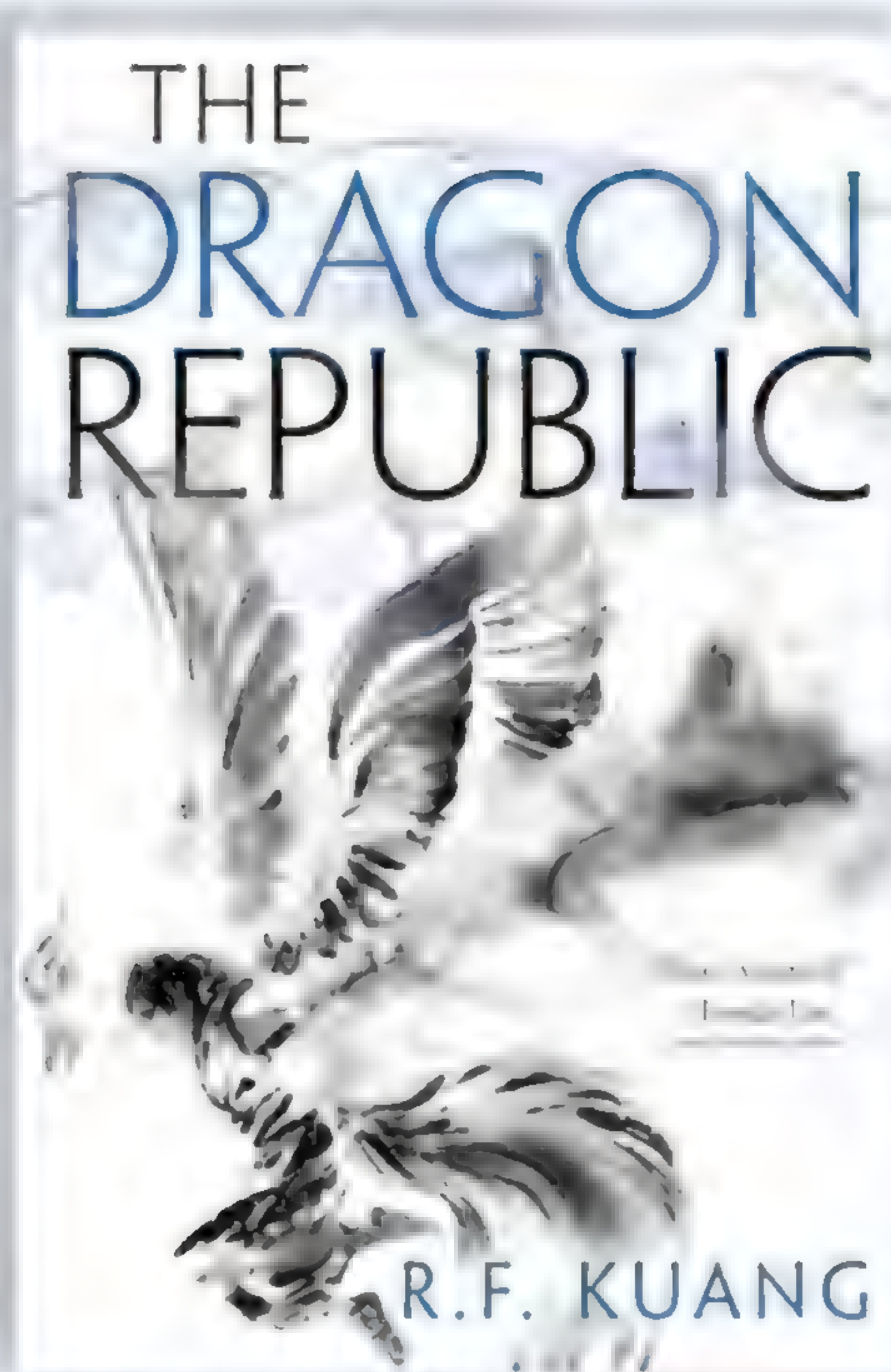
THE DRAGON REPUBLIC

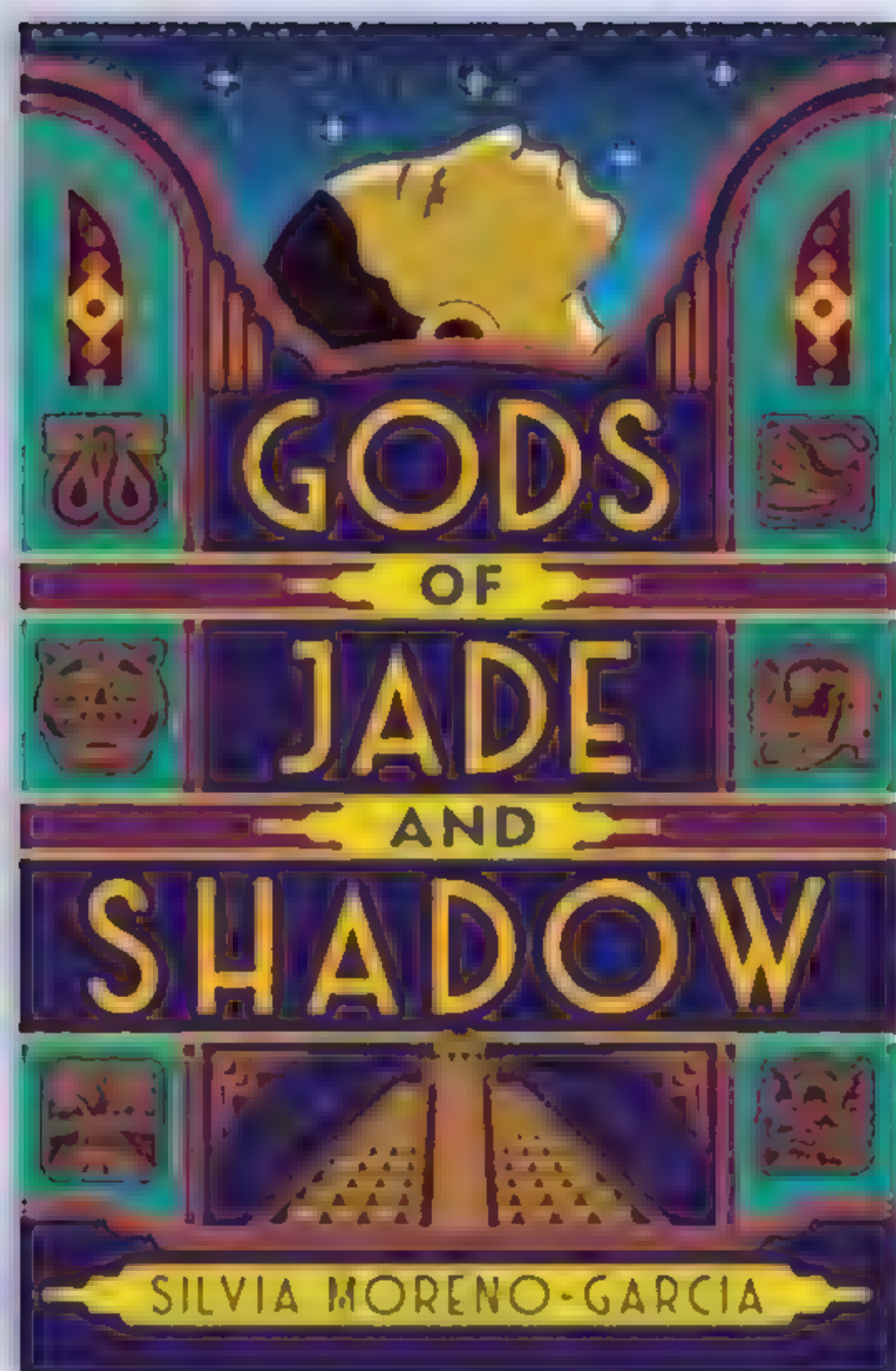
written by R.F. KUANG

The war has ended, at long last—but in its wake, another begins. In R. F. Kuang's sequel to *The Poppy War*, the citizens of the Nikara Empire's southern provinces are no longer battling for survival against an invading force. Now, they set sail north to defeat their former leader, Empress Su Daji, and build a new, democratic government. Rin, a trained warrior, and her fellow shamans also take their place on the warships: though Rin might once have been content to see the

old system (and the traitor at its head) burn, she is swayed by the prospect of helping to create a more just and more unified future for the provinces. But Rin is not just a soldier—she's also the provinces' most powerful, most incendiary and most unpredictable weapon. The story Kuang weaves around Rin and her battle-hardened comrades-in-arms in *The Dragon Republic* builds upon the reputation Kuang earned with her debut as one of contemporary fantasy's most promising writers. —*Cate Matthews*

/ **OTHER WORKS** *The Dragon Republic* is the second in the *The Poppy War* trilogy, followed by *The Burning God* (2020). Kuang then published the standalone *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution* in 2022, which won a Nebula Award, a British Book Award and a Locus Award. Her satirical novel *Yellowface* came out in 2023 and won a British Book Award. *Babel* was named one of TIME's 100 Must-Read Books of 2022 and *Yellowface* made the list in 2023. In 2024, Lionsgate optioned *Yellowface* with plans to develop a series with Karen Kusama as the director and executive producer.





FAIRY TALE

GODS OF JADE AND SHADOW

written by **SILVIA MORENO-GARCIA**

Years after the death of her father, 18-year-old Casiopea Tun lives a Cinderella-like existence. She resides at her wealthy grandfather's home where she's forced to iron his clothes and clean the floors, and dreams of fleeing her southern Mexican town for anywhere else. Getting out seems impossible until Casiopea stumbles upon a wooden box in the house, which she opens only to accidentally free the spirit of the Mayan god of death. He's seeking revenge on his brother and needs her help to get it—and in exchange, promises to help turn her dream of escape into reality. With a plot reminiscent of the classics, the novel is executed in the most vivid and colorful terms. Silvia Moreno-Garcia immerses readers into 1920s Mexico and seamlessly blends fairy tale and folklore into an inspiring quest narrative that poses pointed questions about purpose, power and freedom. —*Annabel Gutterman*

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Silvia Moreno-Garcia was born in 1981 and raised in Baja California, Mexico. She moved to Canada in 2004. She has a master's degree in science and technology from the University of British Columbia. Her first novel, *Signal to Noise* (2015) was shortlisted for a British Fantasy Award. She co-edited the World Fantasy Award-winning anthology *She Walks in Shadows* (2016). Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2021) won a British Fantasy Award and a Locus Award.

YOUNG ADULT FANTASY

PET

written by **AKWAEKE EMEZI**



Monsters have been eradicated from the city of Lucille—at least, that's what everyone is told. But

when a creature springs forth from a painting to befriend a trans girl named Jam, the city's illusions of stability begin to crumble.

Akwaeke Emezi has said their young adult book—which was a 2019 National Book Award finalist—is an allegory for the United States and the way the country turns a blind eye to its problems, specifically, the high rates of murders of Black trans women. “People aren’t really acknowledging what was happening around us,” they told *Teen Vogue* in 2019. “I wanted to tell a story where a young person is in the middle of that... How do you deal with the problem if no one else will look at it?”. —*Andrew R. Chow*

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Akwaeke Emezi grew up in Aba, a commercial town in southern Nigeria. They were a voracious reader and writer from an early age. They moved to Appalachia at age 16 to go to school. Their first novel, *Freshwater* (2018), was an instant hit and nominated for the Women's Prize for Fiction. Emezi was on the 2021 TIME Next Generation Leader list.

YOUNG ADULT FANTASY

WE HUNT THE FLAME

written by **HAFSAH FAIZAL**

Inspired by ancient Arabia, Hafsah Faizal's dazzling young adult novel focuses on the kingdom of Arawiya, where a lost artifact is needed to restore magic to the world. The task of finding the artifact falls to 17-year-old Zafira, who has been traveling the nearby cursed forests disguised as a man called the Hunter. In Arawiya, women aren't allowed to live as freely as men do, leaving Zafira to hide her identity. Her journey becomes intertwined with that of Nasir, known as the Prince of Death, who is also seeking the artifact and is determined to bring down the Hunter. But when a new threat emerges, the two become unexpected allies, with an undeniable chemistry that Faizal lets simmer throughout the book. Though certainly a love story, *We Hunt the Flame* is also a moving portrait of a heroine growing into her power as Zafira fights against the oppression of women.

—Annabel Gutterman



/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Hafsah Faizal was born in Florida and raised in California. She is of Arab and Sri Lankan descent. In 2010, she started a blog reviewing YA novels. She also owns a design company, IceyDesigns, which creates website designs, brand logos, handsewn journals, candles, pins, stickers and other items. She has been coding since she was 13 years old. Faizal, who is a Muslim, is an advocate of underrepresented groups in the YA novel space, and told *Brooklyn Magazine* in 2016 that she knows firsthand how it feels when people judge her for wearing a hood and

veil. She recounted being invited to speak on a panel at a blogging conference, and she was afraid the invite might be rescinded when she sent her headshot. It wasn't, but she said, "Sadly, it happens to me in real life all the time. People are quick to judge me by the clothes I wear, rather than the human I am. I don't even get a word out before they've come to conclusions." *We Hunt the Flame* debuted No. 5 on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and in 2021, STXtv optioned the rights to the book with the intention of turning it into a series. *We Free the Stars*, *Flame's* sequel, came out in 2021.

HISTORICAL FANTASY

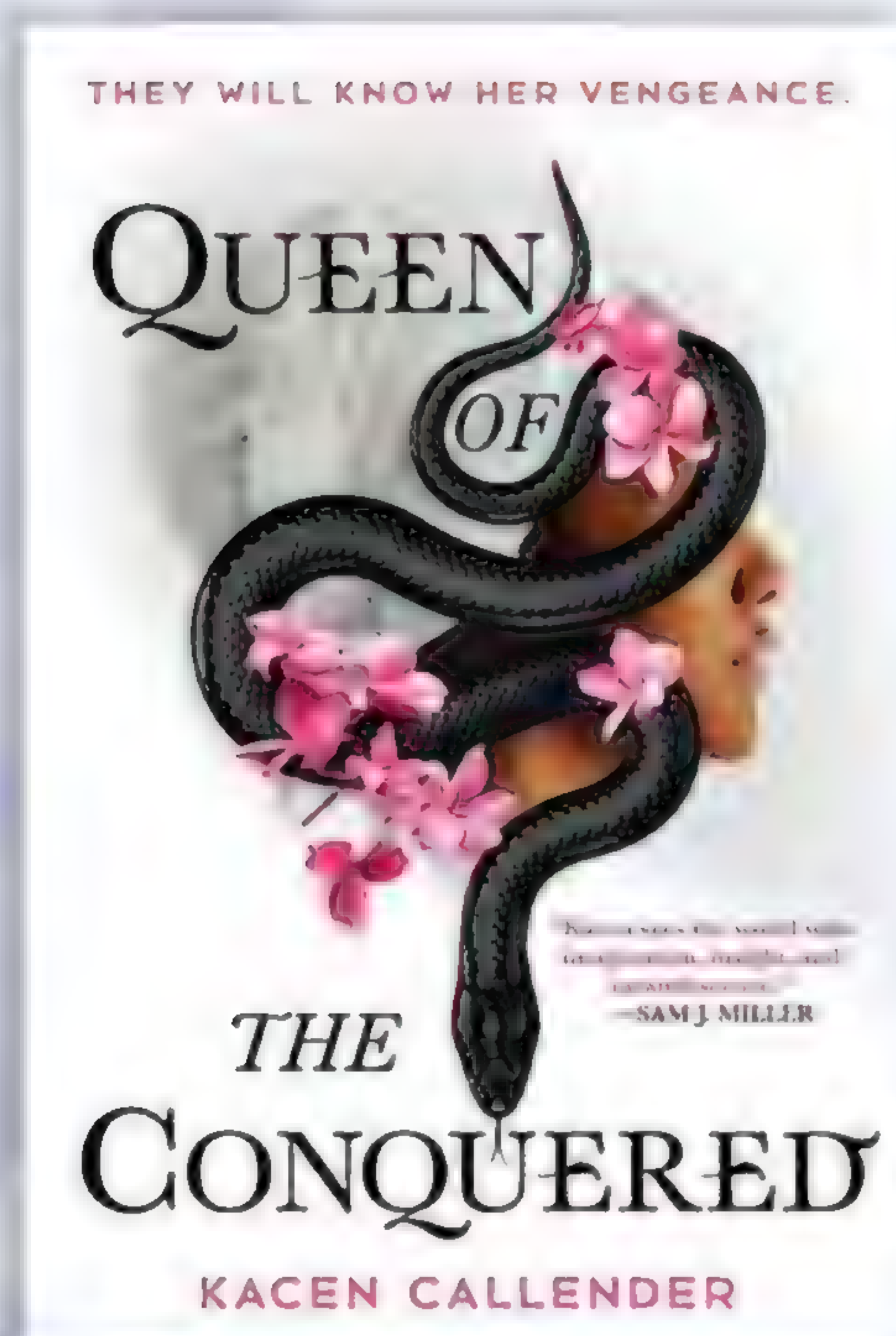
QUEEN OF THE CONQUERED

written by **KACEN CALLENDER**

After beginning their career writing young adult fiction, Kacen Callender published a debut adult novel, 2019's *Queen of the Conquered*, that thrust the genre into a place seldom explored in fantasy: a Caribbean-inspired world, where slavery is the main economic driver. *Queen of the Conquered* follows a Black woman named Sigourney Rose, a former noble who has been gifted with a peculiar "kraft" to read minds and

potentially bend them to her will. After colonizing marauders massacre her family, Sigourney strikes out on a quest for revenge in a rapidly shifting political environment where distinguishing between allies and enemies grows ever more difficult. Callender, who was born in the aftermath of a hurricane in the U.S. Virgin Islands, delivers an intensely compelling story in a world that is both familiar and yet jarringly distorted, with laser focus on often-overlooked experiences and injustices. *Queen of the Conquered* won a World Fantasy Award in 2020. —**Peter Allen Clark**

/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Kacen Callender has a bachelor's degree in Japanese and creative writing from Sarah Lawrence College and a MFA in children's literature from The New School. Before they became an author, they were an editor at Little, Brown Publishing Group. Their first book, *Hurricane Child*, was a children's novel that won a Stonewall Book Award and a Lambda Literary Award. Their 2020 *King of the Dragonflies* won a National Book Award in Young People's Literature, and a Lambda Literary Award, and their *Felix Ever After* (2021) won another Stonewall Book Award. Callender, who admitted to reading *The Vampire Chronicles* at age 10, said in an interview with the Los Angeles Public Library, "I won't speak for other readers, but I like fantasy novels that create parallels to our real world, acting as metaphors and symbols and allowing us to see our world in a different light." Their latest novel for adults, *Infinity Alchemist* (2024), which is intended to be the first in a series, was a *New York Times* bestseller.



HIGH FANTASY

THE RAGE OF DRAGONS

written by **EVAN WINTER**

The greatest fantasy fiction uses the boundless power of imagination to examine the deep limitations that exist in the real world. Evan Winter knows that, and his originally self-published debut, *The Rage of Dragons*, underlines the importance that the fantasy genre can have in reckoning with life on earth. Winter, who was born in the U.K. to South American parents and raised in Zambia, has said he wished to create a world that reflected his family and their global experiences. *The Rage of Dragons*, touted as a cross between *Gladiator*

and *Game of Thrones*, is set among the Omehi people, where every so often a woman is born with “the Gift” to control dragons and their destructive power. The book’s main character is Tau, a swordsman from an oppressed class who is out for revenge after a terrible tragedy. Winter’s debut was re-released by publisher Orbit as part of a four-book deal and won Reddit’s Fantasy Award for best debut novel. The anticipated sequel, *The Fires of Vengeance*, came out in 2020.
—*Peter Allen Clark*

/ **ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Evan Winter was a film director, a cinematographer and the creative director for one of the world’s largest infrastructure companies before becoming an author. According to his website, he has always loved fantasy novels, and he realized “the words in his head would never write themselves.” He told *Lightspeed Magazine* in 2019 that after his son was born, he realized that there weren’t many epic fantasy novels with characters that looked like his son, so he set out to write some before his time runs out. He also credited his experience in cinematography with helping him meticulously plan his novels. Like in film, Winter writes a draft of “shot list” outlines to plan out the book. “Doing these detailed ‘shot lists’ eases my worries about the story-making. It makes first drafts flow without me getting blocked, and the planning allows me to freely discover new directions that I can then consider within the context of the whole,” he said.



YOUNG ADULT FANTASY

ELATSOE

written by **DARCIE LITTLE BADGER**



Seventeen-year-old Ellie lives in a world that closely resembles our own, hers just happens to involve monsters, vampires and

ghost dogs. Though the protagonist of Darcie Little Badger's debut novel is in every way a normal teenager—she loves comic books, ice cream and spending time with her friends—she has also inherited a special skill that has been passed down for generations in her Lipan Apache family. Ellie can summon the ghosts of animals. When her cousin is murdered, Ellie must rely on this magic to help find the answers her family desperately needs. While many fantasy stories center on a character's solo journey to discover whatever they're looking for, Ellie's quest is about others. She is buoyed by the support of her family and friends, whose love for her is a palpable undercurrent throughout *Elatsoe*—and it's that love that propels the young heroine to seek justice for her cousin's mysterious death.

—**Annabel Gutterman**

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Darcie Little Badger was born in Texas but grew up all over the world because of her dad's job as an English professor. Her mother is Lipan Apache. She has a degree in geosciences from Princeton University and a Ph.D. in oceanography from Texas A&M. She worked as an editor of scientific papers until she sold *Elatsoe*, her first novel.



YOUNG ADULT FANTASY

WOVEN IN MOONLIGHT

written by **ISABEL IBÁÑEZ**

In Isabel Ibañez's alternate universe, heroes can weave tapestries with moonlight and read the wisdom in the stars. Exiled and persecuted by a false king, a hidden queen and her decoy, protagonist Ximena, attempt to lead their people in the fictional land of Inkasisa to peace and power. Ximena's talent for magical weaving, and her hidden identity, give her both a force to put to use and a secret to protect. Blending references to Bolivian politics and history with Latin-American mythology, *Woven in Moonlight* is a rich tale of fierce independence, loyalty and friendship—and the lessons we learn when we are forced out of our comfort zones. In Ibañez's debut novel, every detail is rich with meaning and nuance. The novel showcases a fantasy world that transcends traditional Western tropes and underscores the value of complex female characters. —**Raisa Bruner**

/ ABOUT THE AUTHOR Isabel Ibañez was born in Boca Raton, Florida. Her parents were immigrants from Bolivia. In addition to being a writer, she's a graphic designer whose work has been sold at the retail outlets Anthropologie and Crate & Barrel. She designed the cover for *Woven in Moonlight*, which was a *New York Times* bestseller.

TIME

100 MUST-READ FANTASY BOOKS

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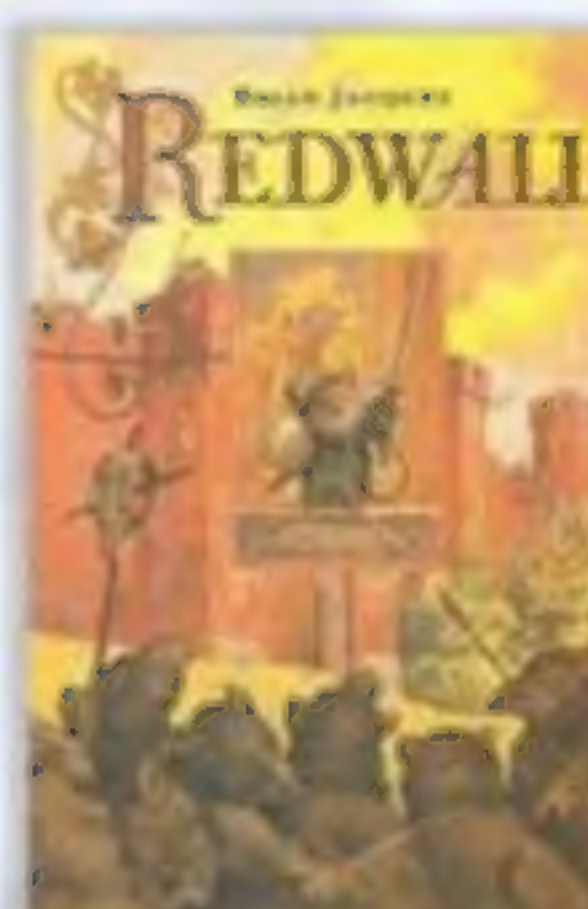
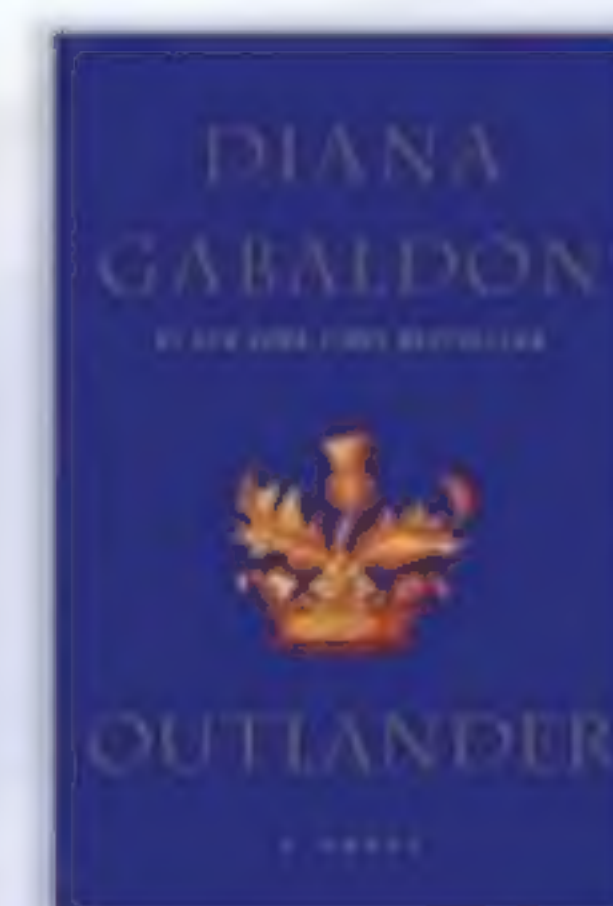
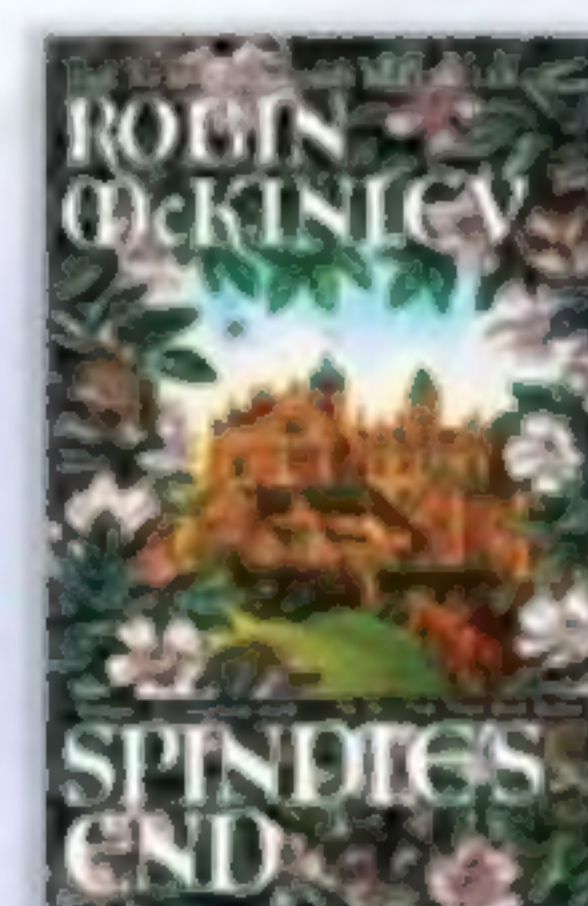
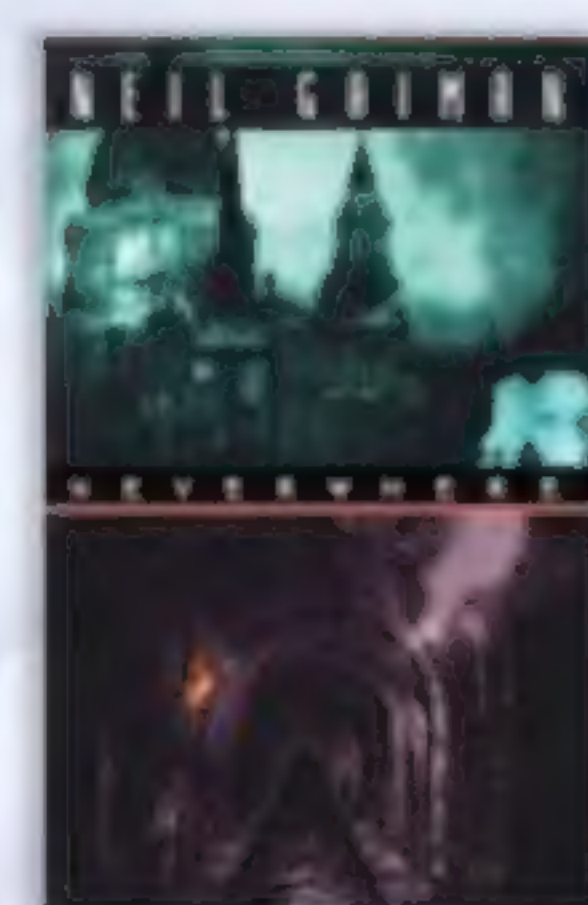
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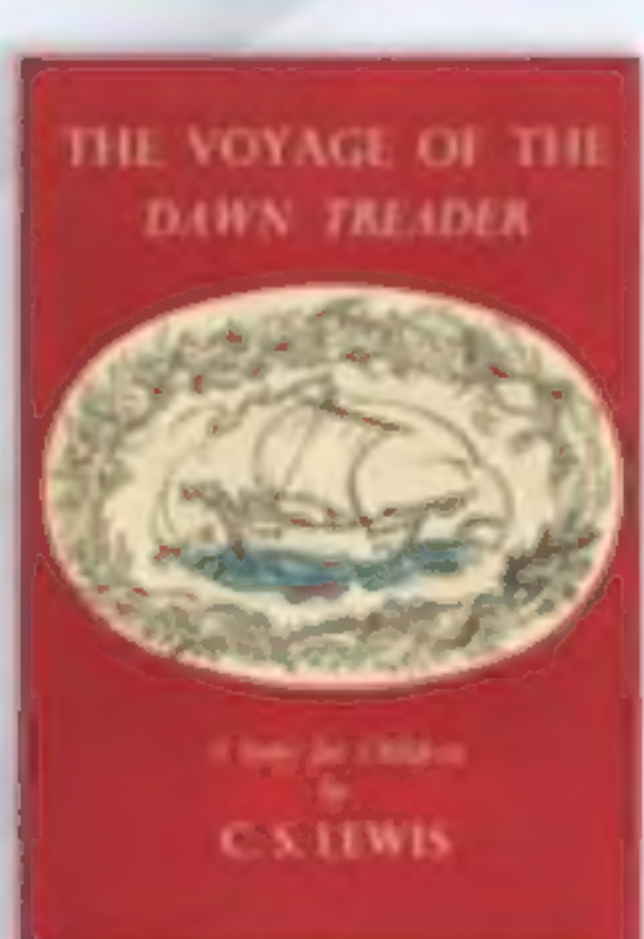
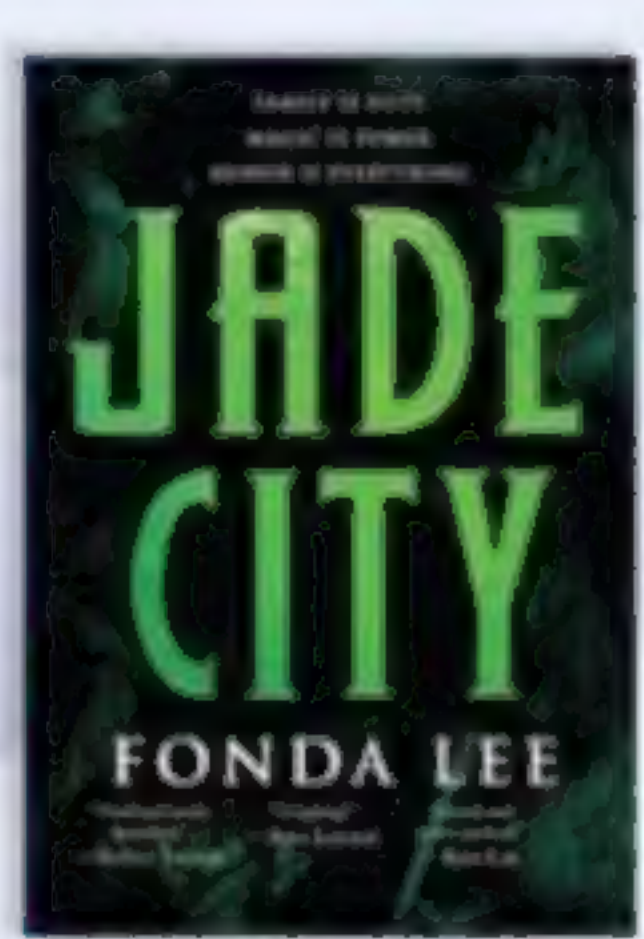
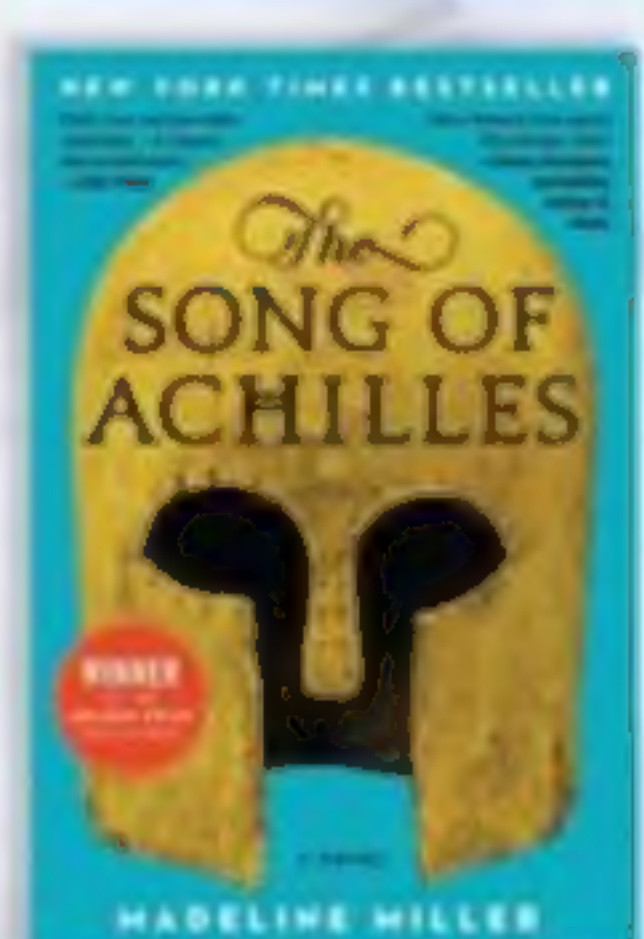
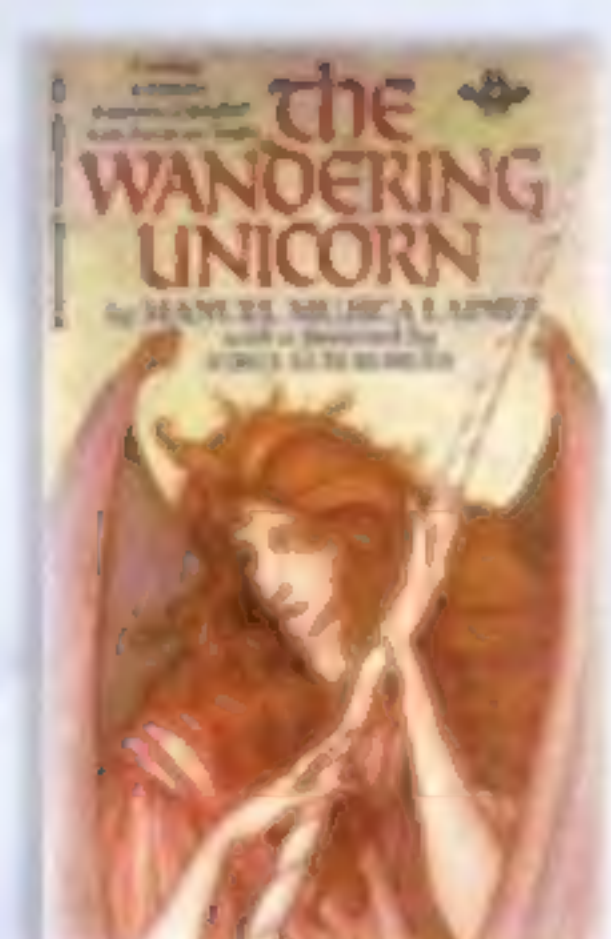
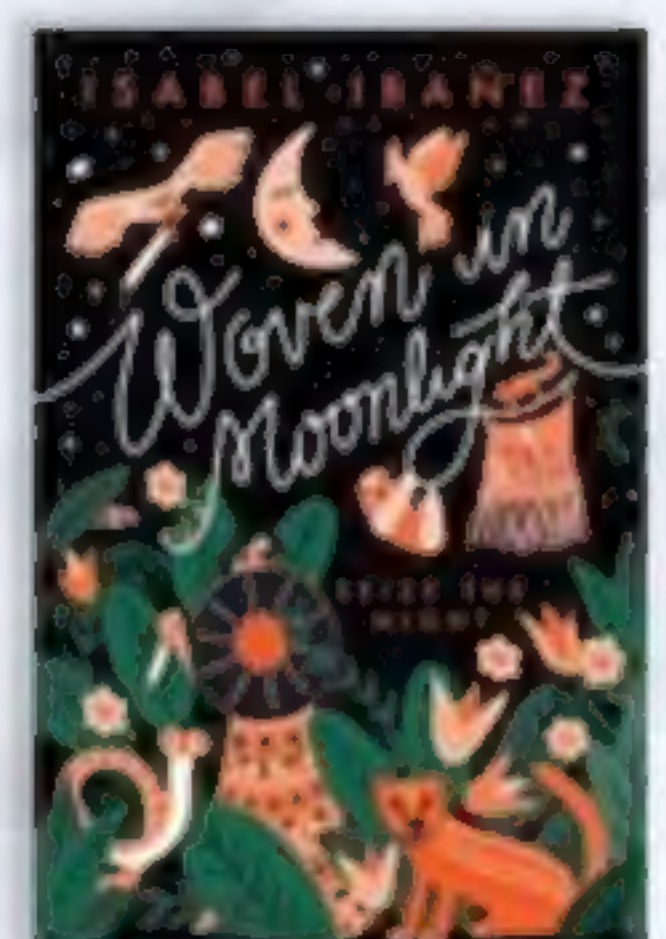
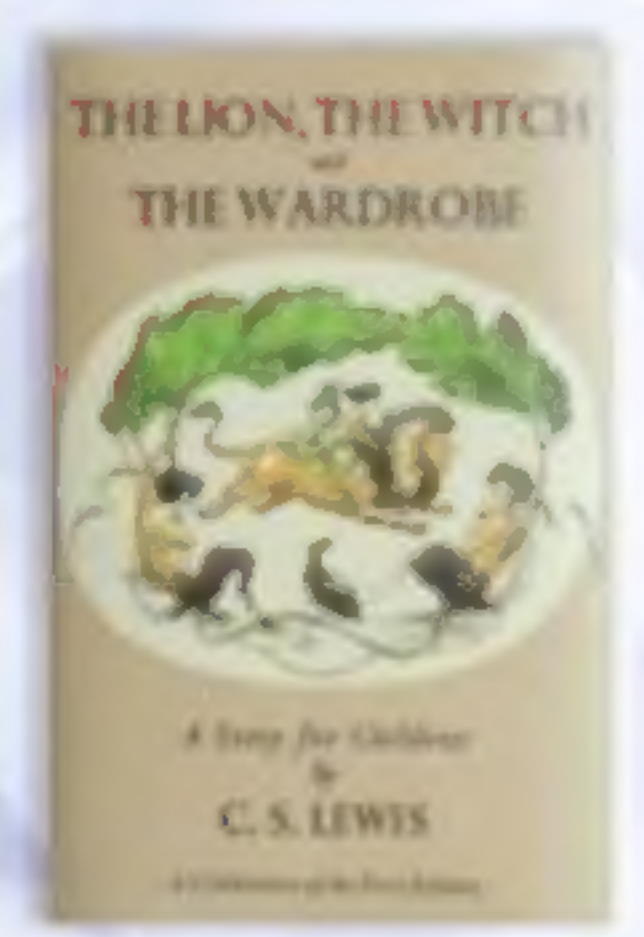
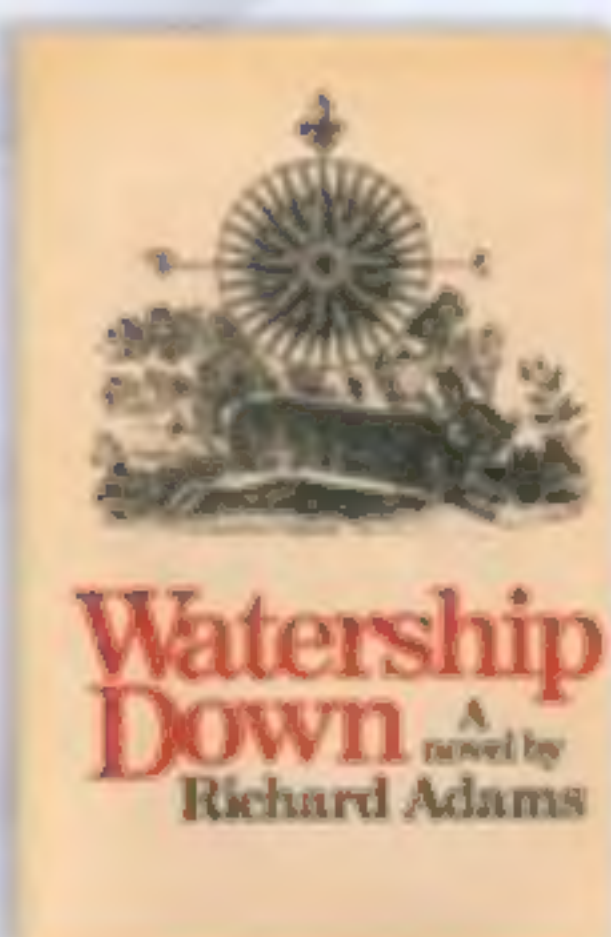
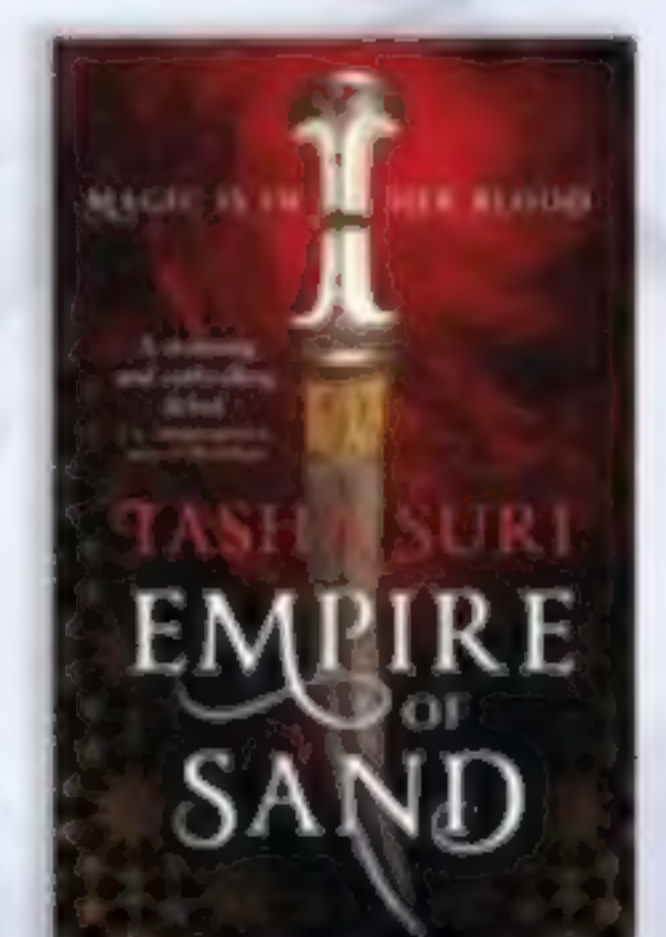
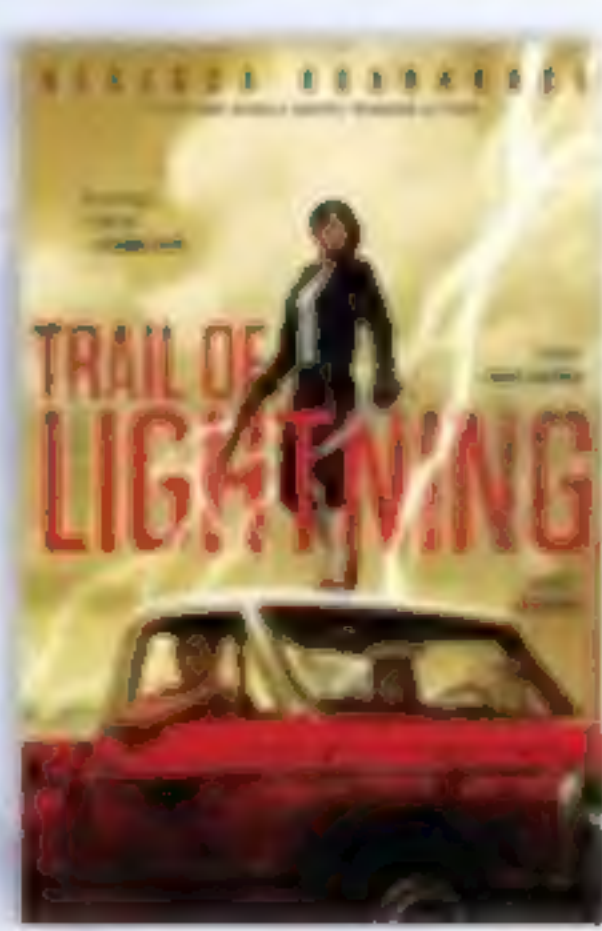
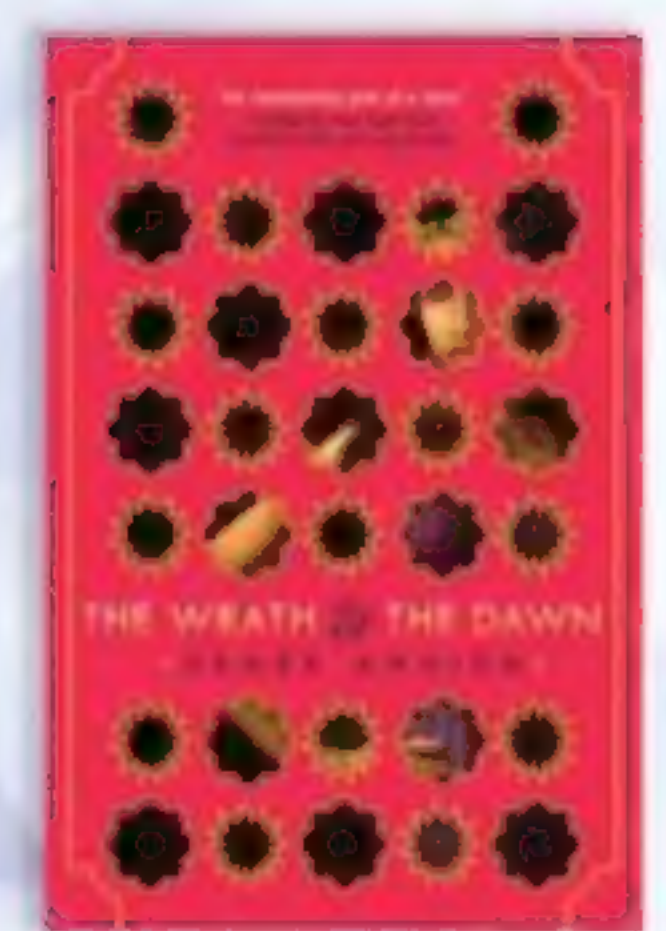
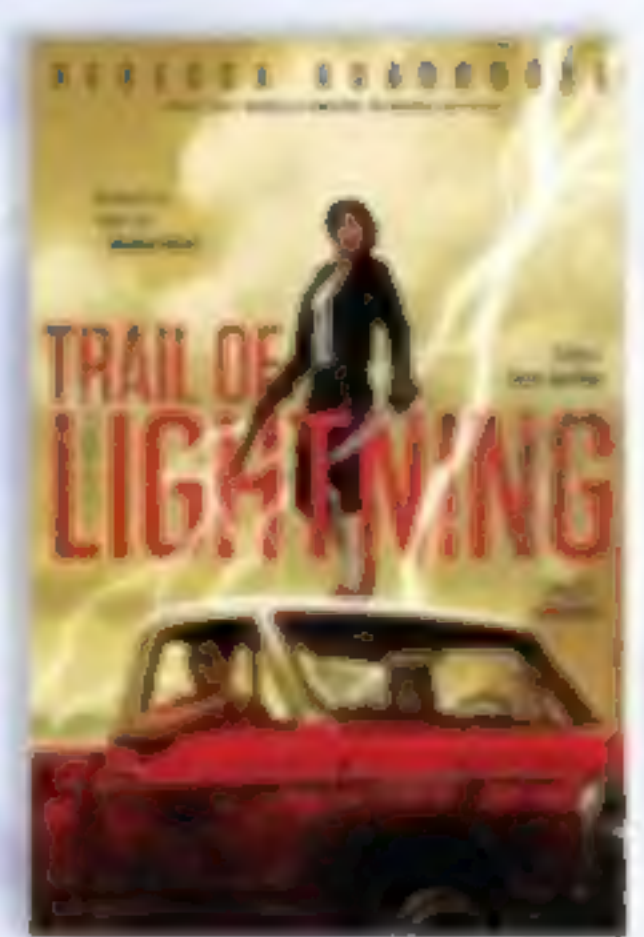
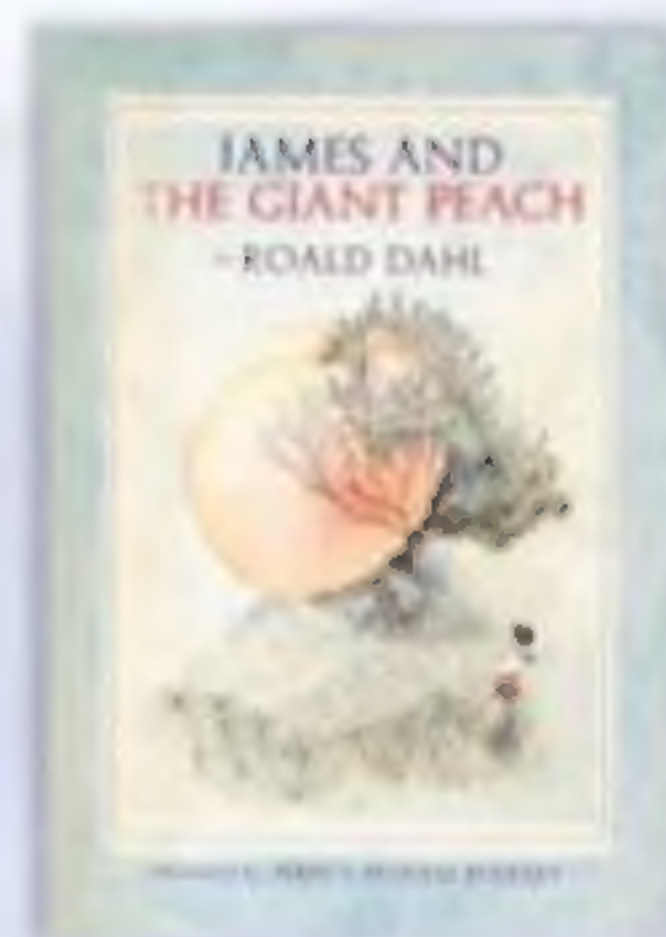
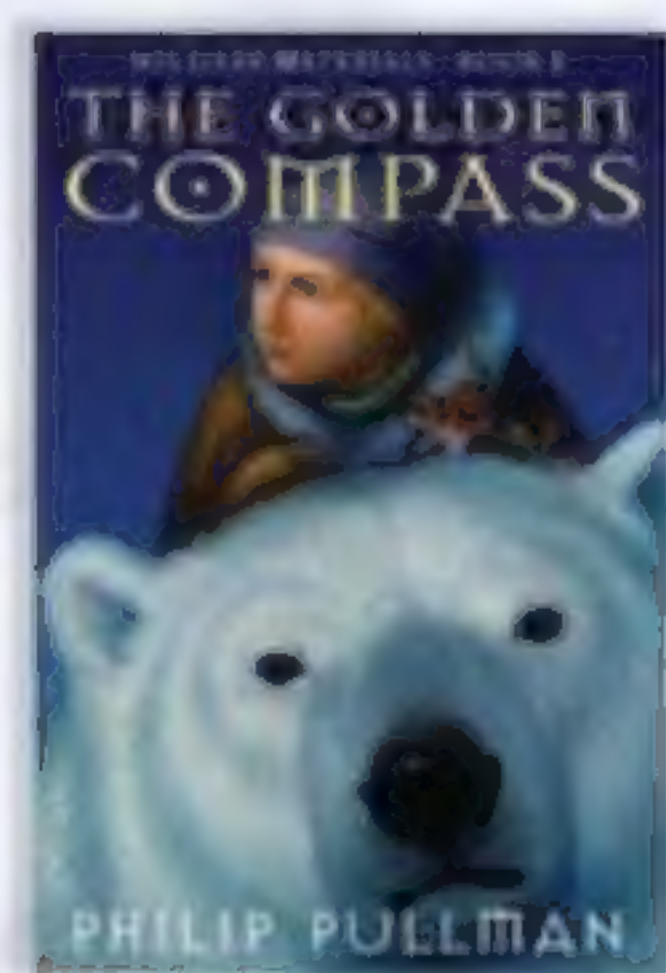
Sylvia Kang for TIME



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